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Kit: Kask Protone helmet, £175, velobrand.co.uk; Oakley Flak Jacket 2.0 shades, £130, oakley.com; Endura FS260-Pro Roubaix jacket, £70, FS260-Pro II bibshort, £70, endurasport.com; Giro HRC Team cycle sock, £17, Giro Empire SLX Shoes, £250, zyro.co.uk

Photography: Henry Carter



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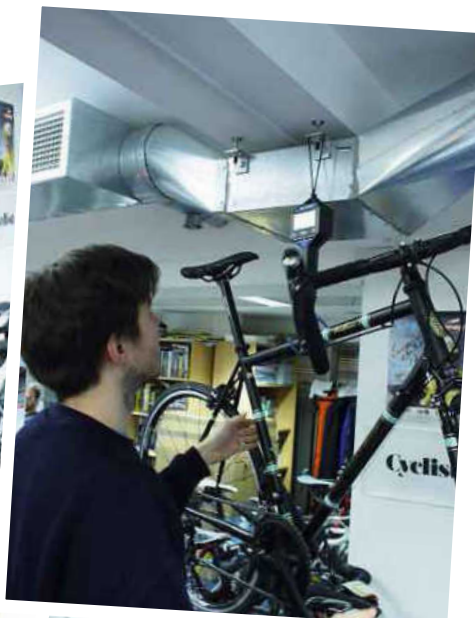
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Nick

Nick Soldering,
Editor

ED'S LETTER

Hello and welcome to the issue we've been referring to as 'The hardcore issue' as we've been putting it together. Why? Well, because it's been inspired by all of you who are still riding at this time of year. With the worsening weather, our roads noticeably empty of cyclists, if you're still out there pedalling, we salute you, for you are truly part of Britain's cycling hardcore. If you're not, then maybe we can persuade you to get back in the saddle with all the inspirational stuff we've crammed into this issue.

Stuff like our exclusive interview with Team BMC's Taylor Phinney on page 32. Taylor crashed in 2014 in

horrific fashion. Coming off at nearly 60mph, the smash left one of his legs in pieces. His account of coping with and coming back from his injuries is stirring stuff indeed.

Also check out our First Ride feature in which we beast three of the toughest bikes we could find on the British Army's playground in the Brecon Beacons. Turn to page 20 to find out if we could break them!

There's plenty of other fun stuff, too, plus bundles of practical advice on how to ride and survive when conditions are tough, as well as the best gear out there for dealing with the dimmest or grimmest days. Enjoy!

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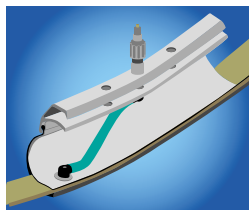
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INSIDE
➔



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10 REASONS YOU'LL LOVE THIS BIKE

Pinarello's stunning Gan Disk promises Tour-winning tech at a price that won't make you weep



1 IT'S A PINARELLO

OK, call us shallow, but some names just carry a certain prestige and desirability – and not without good reason in Pinarello's case. Founded in 1952 by Giovanni Pinarello, the Italian firm's bikes have been ridden to 12 Tour de France wins by seven different riders.

2 IT'S DEAD SMART

We love the high-gloss bare-carbon look, finished with subtle red highlights, but it also comes in an eye-catching white version with purple flashes.

3 IT'S BETTER THAN FROOME'S BIKE

Bear with us on this. New for 2016, the Gan range is based on the race-proven tech of the multiple Tour-winning Dogma F8, only toned down to make it less extreme. Basically, it's not as bone-jarringly stiff, and you won't need to be as lithe as Chris Froome to get comfy on it. Hence, it's a better choice than the Dogma for mortals like us.

4 IT'S FAST

You can tell at a glance that the Gan Disk is designed for speed, with tubes and components in wind-cheating aero profiles – even down

to those teardrop-shaped headset spacers.

5 IT HAS A HIGH-TECH FORK

The distinctive curved shape of the Onda fork isn't purely cosmetic, it provides extra strength and rigidity, which means sharper cornering. At the top, it blends in with the down tube for superior aerodynamics.

6 IT'S FINISHED IN STYLE

Finishing kit comes mainly from Pinarello's in-house brand Most, and it's all high-quality stuff in lightweight carbon, from the oversized aero bars and stem to the 'fastback' aero seatpost. Add Shimano's Ultegra drivetrain and awesome RS785 hydraulic disc brakes and you've got an outstanding, deeply desirable package.

7 IT HAS TOP WHEELS

The hand-built Vision Team 30 Disc is a strong and reliable wheelset, with CNC-machined alloy hubs, aero spokes, and a handsome black anodised finish to the 30mm-deep rims.

8 IT'S GOT ALL THE GEARS YOU NEED

The compact 50/34 chainset combined with an 11-28 cassette is a pretty much ideal set-up for fast sportive and club riders, whether you're after pure speed or want to tackle big climbs.

9 IT'S A PERFECT FIT

The Gan Disk comes in 10 sizes, from a tiny 44 to a huge 59.5, with 1cm increments in the middle of the range.

10 IT'S GREAT VALUE

We wouldn't say the Gan Disk was cheap, but the three-bike range starts at a relatively affordable £2,199 for the Sora model. At £3,499, the Ultegra model shown here is a complete high-performance bike for less than a Dogma F8 frameset. Start saving now! 🚴

Frame: Torayca T600 carbon asymmetric frame, Onda T600 carbon asymmetric fork with 1.125in to 1.5in tapered integrated headset, Shimano Ultegra 6800 Hollowtech II Italian bottom bracket

Groupset: Shimano Ultegra 6800 22-speed/RS685 hydraulic shifters

Cassette: Shimano Ultegra 6800, 11-28

Brakes: Shimano RS785 Hydraulic Disc

Bars: Most Jaguar XC 3K Alu-Carbon Aero, 31.8mm

Stem: Most Tiger Ultra Alu-Carbon Aero 31.8mm

Saddle: Fizik Arione R3

Seatpost: Pinarello Gan T600 Carbon

Wheels: Vision Team30 Disc

Tyres: Vittoria Rubino Pro, 25c

Weight: 8.6kg (size 56)



PINARELLO GAN DISK ULTEGRA

Price: £3,499

Contact: thebikerooms.com



You can tell at a glance that the Gan is designed for speed, with tubes and components in wind-cheating aero profiles

PRICE: £4,000
CONTACT: specialized.com



Specialized Allez Sprint X1

An untamed spirit and metal frame make this a circuit-racing brute

Crit races are all attack-attack. Short, brutal, and taking place on compact, twisting city-centre circuits, they typically last an hour, with no time to catch your breath. Riders jostle for position, diving into corners, and sprinting out the other side.

From this crucible of high-speed racing, Specialized has conjured up the aluminium Allez Sprint. Featuring razor-

sharp geometry, aerodynamic profiling borrowed from its Venge race bike, and 1x11 gearing (the small chainring is dead weight for crit racers anyway), it's one cool machine.

While aluminium may be carbon's poor relation, companies like Specialized still produce loads of metal bikes, and a comparatively cheaper aluminium frame makes perfect sense for a crit racer – as

any experienced racer will tell you, don't race it if you can't afford to replace it!

We were a bit miffed when Specialized unveiled it last autumn, then announced it wouldn't be sold in the UK, but they've seen the error of their ways and it will now be available on special order. You're unlikely to find yourself up against another on race day though, adding exclusivity to its appeal.

Frame: E5 Premium Aluminium D'Aluisio Smartweld

Fork: Works FACT carbon, size-specific taper

Groupset: SRAM Force 1, 11-speed

Chainset: Force 1, 50t

Brakes: SRAM Force

Bars: Specialized shallow drop, alloy

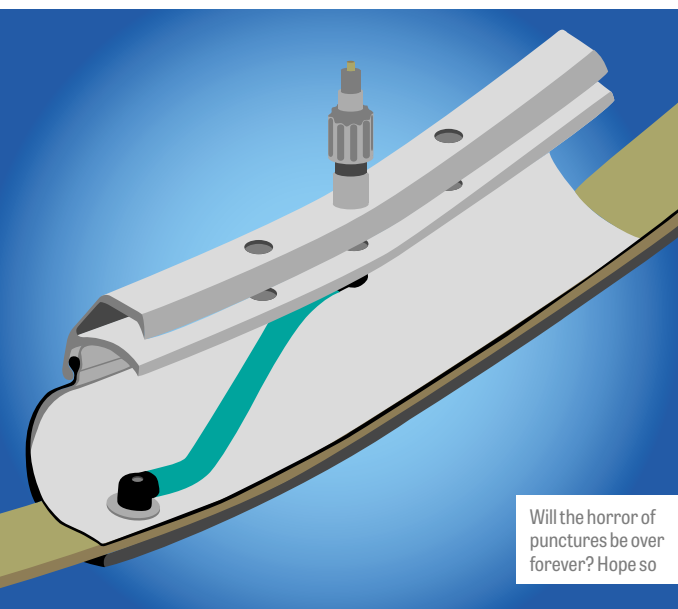
Stem: Specialized 3D forged alloy

Saddle: Body Geometry Toupe Comp

Wheels: Roval deep-section carbon

Tyres: S-Works Turbo, 120TPI

Contact: specialized.com



Will the horror of punctures be over forever? Hope so

TYRE THAT INFLATES ITSELF

Clever bloke reinvents the wheel. Well, the inner tube.

There exists on this planet a splendidly named inventor by the name of Benjamin Krempel, and it has been Mr Krempel's long-held ambition to create a bike tyre that inflates itself. A while back he created a prototype that was interesting but flawed, so he went back to his shed and shut himself away again. Three years on, he has re-emerged from his shabby darkness brandishing something which he calls the PumpTube. And this is how it works...

The PumpTube inflates itself using the motion of the wheel. It has a one-way valve which draws in air, not directly to the inner tube itself, but to one end of the PumpTube – a secondary tube that runs along the outside of the inner tube. As the tyre rolls against the road surface, the

PumpTube is compressed, forcing air into the inner tube. This creates a vacuum in the PumpTube which then causes more air to be drawn in through the valve. This, in turn, is fed into the inner tube until the tyre reaches the desired pressure, which can be preset on the valve stem.

All of this adds up to riders no longer needing to stop to pump up tyres if they suffer pinhole leaks, while slowing down the effect of larger punctures – although these will ultimately still need patching.

PumpTube will be compatible with third-party 700c and 26in tyres, with prices expected to be £20-35. Absolute hokum or a giant bounce forward? We really hope it's the latter and promise to bring you a full report as soon as PumpTube launches later this year. 🚲



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Designed and built to withstand whatever the weather or the road throws at you, Whyte's supremely versatile RD-7 disc brake road bikes promise year-round comfort and enjoyment.

The press agree – BikesEtc's review of the 2016 Whyte Dorset awarded it "Best In Test" and scored it 10/10 for its "fantastic ride quality". "It offers a fantastic all-round package. Although it's clearly designed with commuters in mind, it's capable of so much more than that. This is the definition of a versatile bike."

RD-7 Whyte Dorset

Bikes Etc Dec 2015

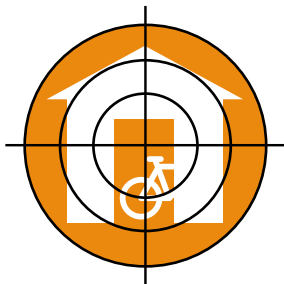


The Whyte RD-7 range starts at £799. For more information – or to try one for yourself, contact your local Whyte retailer.



whyte.bike





HOW THIEVES MAY BE USING STRAVA

List your address on social media? Don't!

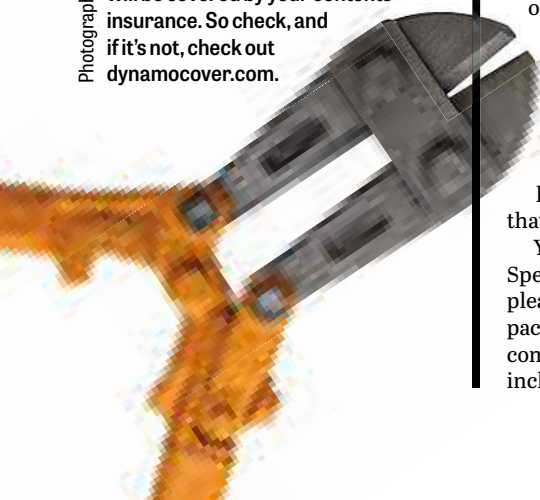
Hands up who uses Strava? Hands up who uses the optional privacy setting? No? Then you might want to take note of this cautionary tale. Mark Leigh is a 54-year-old cycling enthusiast from Manchester who, after a particularly successful day in the saddle recently, did what thousands of us all over the world regularly do, and uploaded his ride results to Strava.

'I'd come back from a ride around the Saddleworth hills, which I tracked on Strava,' Mark revealed. He then returned home, locked his bike in his garage and went to bed. The following day, however, he found his garage been 'cleverly broken into' and both his bikes – worth a total of £1,500 – had been nicked.

With other valuables in his well-concealed garage left alone, and reports of similar thefts in the area, Mark – an IT manager – realised that he may well have been targeted via Strava. The app, after all, encourages you to reveal the start and end point of your ride. In Mark's case, that was his home address, which Strava shared with the world as his security settings weren't set to private. Oops!

So, what's the solution? Simple – make your start/finish point a mile away from home. Use the ride to and from this location as your warm up and warm down. Oh, and just so you know, it's unlikely your bike will be covered by your contents insurance. So check, and if it's not, check out dynamocover.com.

Photography: Adobe Stock



SPEEDFORCE
PRICE: £107 (tbc)
CONTACT: speedforce.com



New bike gadget that does flippin' well everything!

Give your bike an IQ boost for 2016 with the world's first integrated smart-stem wizardry

Cycling should be simple, but like every other aspect of modern life, it's become 'gadgetised'. Clamber on your bike for a quick spin round the local lanes and, chances are, you'll have any number of thingamajigs attached to either you or your ride, ranging from a GPS device or cadence sensor to a heart-rate monitor, headlight or smartphone.

If only someone would come up with a way of combining the lot into one simple unit... What's that you say? They already have?

Yep! A company called Speedforce has created a rather pleasing-looking bike stem that packs all of this stuff into one unified component. This splendid gizmo includes a 150-lumen light and a pro-

grade computer that automatically monitors and records cycling data as well as provides you with real-time navigation via its built-in GPS.

All this useful information is delivered on a 1.6in (320x320 pixel) colour screen and it can record up to 180 days worth of data, supporting both Android (4.0 and up) and iOS (7.0 and up). As if that wasn't enough, the gadget also comes with its own social media app – which the computer can directly communicate with, uploading and downloading data on the fly. The bike unit also offers an impressive 40 hours of battery life – meaning it'll cope with all but the most arduous of audaxes.

Due out in March, it's expected to retail for around £107. Keep an eye out in *BikesEtc* for a review soon. 🚴





If you dress properly, plan ahead and are adaptable, then winter can do one



WIGGO'S TOP 5 TIPS FOR WINTER RIDING

World's Greatest Cyclist™ on how to keep riding in awful weather

You may have noticed that this issue is all about how to keep in the saddle through the worst the British weather can throw at you. Well, it just so happens a certain Sir Bradley Wiggins had some solid advice on this very subject when he popped up on Radio 4's *Today* show as their celebrity guest editor recently...

1 WEAR THE RIGHT CLOBBER
'The main thing when cycling in bad weather is clothing choice, really. They do say now in cycling that there's no such thing as bad weather, it's bad clothing.'

2 GO EASY ON THE BRAKES
'A lot of the bikes have carbon wheels now, and you don't have as effective a braking surface on a carbon wheel in the wet weather. You tend to not stop when you brake in the rain, which causes more crashes – that's why we see more in the Tour de France now.'

3 MAKE SURE YOU'RE SEEN
'Visibility is always reduced. It does help quite a lot if you

have decent lights on your bike. Most waterproofs now have fluorescent or standout colours. Anything you can do to be seen more by other riders is going to help you in the long run.'

4 ALWAYS PLAN AHEAD
'If you plan ahead a little, it makes your life a hell of a lot simpler. Rather than getting demoralised by it, thinking, "I ain't gonna do that again, I'm soaked I've got to sit around all day in wet clothing," storing some clean duds at work – some socks, things like that – make it a lot easier for you.'

5 BE ADAPTABLE WITH YOUR TRAINING
'Be flexible and adjust to the weather. So you might delay it a day and do it tomorrow if you know it's going to be dry – take the sensible option. If you persist and say, "No, today's the day I've got to do that," and you go and do four, five, six hours, get really cold and then end up getting a cold or illness – that can end up setting you back two or three weeks.'

76,076

Number of miles cycled in one year by Yank Kurt 'Tarzan' Searvogel. At an average of 208 miles a day for 365 days, it's a new world record!

No disc brakes for Fab

Cancellara sticks to rim brakes for his final season

The UCI has given disc brakes the nod for the 2016 race season, but it's a "Thanks but no thanks!" from King of the Classics, Fabian Cancellara. The Swiss rider known as Spartacus, who retires at the end of this season, has decided to go out in old-school style and is shunning discs for traditional rim brakes.

'I don't want to change things for my final year,' the 34-year-old revealed. 'I'm still on Shimano's mechanical group – the only one in our team to use it instead of electronic. I don't think they make me go faster or slower. It's a technical and personal decision.'

So what's behind Cancellara's thinking? Having tested them over

the winter, it would seem team Trek-Segafredo's main man is more interested in going quicker than stopping quicker – which the heavier, yet more powerful disc brakes are designed to do.

It remains to be seen how many other pros will choose to stick with rim brakes. Some doom merchants predict that a mix braking tech in the peloton will lead to a lot more pile-ups, but we're not convinced by that argument. But it's going to be interesting finding out what happens as the season starts! 🚴

For tips on how to ride like Cancellara, see page 110

Spartacus still won't be using disc brakes or an electronic groupset



Photography: Adobe Stock, epa/Alamy

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TOUGH BIKES - BEASTED!

The Brecon Beacons is where Britain's military elite are put through their paces. Where better to test some of the toughest bikes out there?

WORDS **MATT PAGE** PHOTOGRAPHY **ANTHONY PEASE**

ON TEST



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**MERIDA RIDE
DISC 5000
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**SPECIALIZED
ROUBAIX SL
COMP DISC
£2,000**





If it's good enough for
the SAS, then it's going
to be good enough for us





The buzz of the Classics season is almost upon us and with it we expect to see the latest flurry of comfort-aiding bikes and kit brought to market. Paris-Roubaix is perhaps the most famous and most gruelling test for the bikes with rough and muddy cobbled roads along the way, and teams often bring out specialist bikes and kit just for races like this.

Throughout the history of the race, manufacturers have experimented with designs and tech – there was even a blitz of bikes with mountain bike-style suspension in the '90s – but we seem to have reached a point

where teams and riders have a general consensus on what's best to ride – and in appearance at least, they're very similar to the standard road-racing bike, save a few subtle differences.

We picked three bikes designed for this kind of riding, two of them based on models the pros will be riding this season and all around £2k, and beasted them in the same part of the world the SAS do their testing – the Brecon Beacons. We thrashed them on surfaces ranging from smooth tarmac to off-road sections left over from the area's industrial past to see just how tough they really are.



Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough (see page 120)

Tough riding maybe, but the reward is roads like these



In the comfort zone

Manufacturers have many ways of creating comfort. From frame design and the addition of dampers, such as Specialized's Zertz (isomer inserts in the fork and seatstays) or Trek's IsoSpeed (a similar insert in the joint of the decoupled seat tube and top tube) as used in its Domane range, or simply fitting wider tyres or gel inserts in the bar tape.

While carbon fibre is famed for being more comfortable, it isn't always the case and anyone who assumes all carbon fibre bikes are

more comfortable than aluminium ones may end up being surprised – especially at lower price points.

The ability to reduce the feedback or buzz from the road is key in creating comfort and even the most uncomfortable of bikes can be turned into more rideable ones with careful component choices. For a cheap-and-easy way to increase comfort, try a double wrap of bar tape – something that many of the pro racers will be doing at the cobbled Classic races.



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EASTWAY Zener D1

£1,800

Can online giant Wiggle trump the big boys with its Eastway brand?

Eastway might not be a new name, having been established many years ago, but it will be unknown to many. However, you can expect to see a lot more of it from 2016, as online giant Wiggle has taken over the brand. The Zener D1 is the highest in the range of the Endurance road bikes, with two other models beneath it.

First impressions are good, the level of components is above the others on test, despite it being the cheapest bike. The frame geometry bucks the trend for tall head tubes that are more common with endurance bikes, with our 52cm bike having a relatively tiny 120mm head tube. Anyone who prefers a higher riding position can still use the stackers and flip the stem upwards to create the same effect.

The head angle is more relaxed than a typical road-racing machine, which means handling is composed and not at all nervous, but the short 408mm chainstays means it changes direction quickly and it had us all grinning like maniacs on the downhills.

Unlike the Specialized, there are no inserts to kill road buzz and add an extra layer of comfort, but that doesn't mean it was lacking in this respect. The bridge-less and narrow seatstays add compliance at the rear end and offer ample clearance for tyres up to 32mm. The 28mm Continental Ultra Sport tyres that are equipped as standard are a good match for the bike, giving good grip in all conditions.

The only disappointment we had was with the puzzling lack of front and rear mudguard mounts, which are present on both the others and would really turn the Zener into a year-round riding machine, given our rather wet winters. The internal cable routing is tidy and simple – giving a clean look and a much neater front end.

The Mavic Aksium wheels are the heaviest on test and would normally mark down a bike at this price point, but the light frame and build kit help to mask their weight well, making the bike a joy to climb on – even on the steepest of hills. However, if you swapped them out for something even lighter, you'll easily reap the benefits. Even though it's only available in one colour scheme, the Zener D1 has set the bar high for the others on test.



The Zener is great at climbing and stable at high speed

**GOOD**

- **Geometry** Gives a low, racy position that's stable and fun.
- **Stiffness** The most enjoyable bike to climb on, with a real zip when you put the power down.
- **Groupset** Full Ultegra on board and hydraulic brakes.

**NOT SO GOOD**

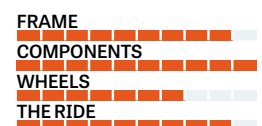
- **Lack of mudguard mounts** Where are these?
- **Lack of colour options** Don't like the black & white? Tough!
- **Wheels** The Aksiums are solid, but lighter ones would turn this into a rocket ship.



PRICE: £1,800
WEIGHT: 8.5.kg (size 52)
FRAME: Eastway full carbon monocoque
FORK: Eastway full-carbon endurance disc
GROUPSET: Shimano Ultegra 6800
BRAKES: Shimano R685
CHAINSET: Shimano Ultegra 6800, 50/34
CASSETTE: Shimano Ultegra, 11-28
BAR: Ritchey Comp Evo Curve
STEM: Ritchey Comp 4-axis
SADDLE: Fizik Aliante
SEATPOST: Ritchey Comp
WHEELS: Mavic Aksium One Disc
TYRES: Continental Ultra Sport, 28c
CONTACT: wiggle.co.uk

**CONCLUSION**

The Zener impressed us with the spec level for the money, offering everything the others do and more – while also being the cheapest option. The ride is fantastic, offering a good mix of comfort, speed and racy geometry which makes it fun to ride, but lighter wheels would work wonders. 🚴

Rating

OVERALL
9.1
 10

MERIDA Ride Disc 5000

£1,900

Paris-Roubaix tested frame with comfort at the heart of its design

First impressions count, and the matt red colour of the Merida makes it stand out, while the slightly bowed top tube and seatstays just add to the appeal. On paper, the Ride 5000 looks well-suited to the task, being based on the same bike that's used by the Lampre-Merida WorldTour team in many Classic races.

From the moment we set off, the most obvious and significant feature was the very tall head tube. With a tall headset cap adding even further to it, side-by-side it's around 20-30mm taller than the other bikes on test (even the smallest 47cm frame has a 140mm head tube). While some riders will look purposefully for this high-up riding position for the comfort benefits, others will shy away from it like our test rider who struggled to get close to his normal low-down posture.

High riding position aside, the Merida definitely delivered on its promise for a comfortable ride, even with fairly standard 25mm tyres, and generous frame clearances mean there's plenty of room for 28mm rubber or larger if you prefer. Hidden mounts make it a simple and painless task to add mudguards, making the Ride 5000 an excellent choice for winter training or commuting.

Although both the front and rear derailleurs are Shimano Ultegra, the non-series RS500 chainset and 105-level RS505 STI shifters are slightly disappointing compared to the other bikes – shifting performance is fine, and braking performance is faultless, but they are bulkier and less comfortable than Ultegra shifters.

The Fulcrum wheels are decent performers, not exceptionally light, but they do their job without any issues and offer good levels of stiffness and reliability on rougher roads.

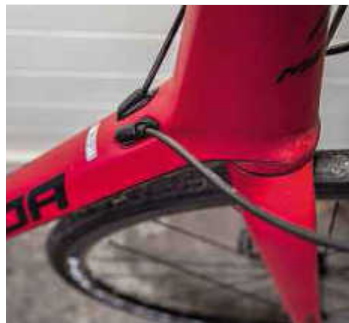
When it comes to climbing, the tall head tube makes it harder to get your weight over the front of the bike and another small annoyance on our test bike were the cables, which bowed out wide before being routed internally on the down tube. When climbing out of the saddle, we found our legs hitting them from time to time. On flatter, cruising sections, the stiffness of the frame combined with comfort levels to spare makes it a pleasure to ride.



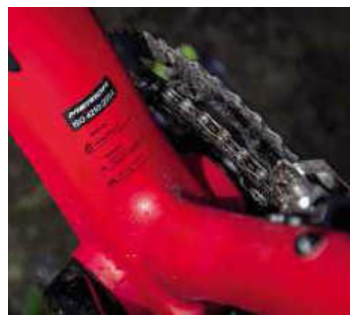
An eye-catching paintjob is just one of the Merida's many rewarding features

**GOOD**

- **Ride quality** Excellent – a great bike for all-day rides.
- **Front-end response** The 15mm bolt-thru axle front wheel really improves stability.
- **Looks** The matte paint finish should be easy to keep clean.

**NOT SO GOOD**

- **High front end** A low riding position isn't really possible.
- **Cable routing** Cables bow out and can get in your way when riding out of the saddle.
- **STI levers** Less comfy than others when on the hoods.



PRICE: £1,900
WEIGHT: 8.9kg (size 56)
FRAME: Ride Disc CF2, Ride Carbon Disc 15 fork
GROUPSET: Shimano RS505 shifters, Ultegra front & rear mechs
BRAKES: Shimano RS785
CHAINSET: Shimano RS500, 50/34
CASSETTE: Shimano 105, 11-32
BARS: FSA Gossamer compact
STEM: Merida Pro Carbon
SADDLE: Prologo Kappa 3
SEATPOST: Merida Carbon
WHEELS: Fulcrum Racing Sport Disc
TYRES: Maxxis Detonator 25mm
CONTACT: merida-bikes.com

**CONCLUSION**

At times the Merida proved to be brilliant, being comfortable without losing any stiffness, although the geometry might not suit all riders – particularly if you like to get low. Smack bang in the middle of its competitors price-wise, we still found it a pleasure to ride. Plus it looks stunning! 🚴

Rating

FRAME	██████████	██████████
COMPONENTS	██████████	██████████
WHEELS	██████████	██████████
THE RIDE	██████████	██████████

OVERALL
8.3
 10

SPECIALIZED

Roubaix SL Comp Disc

£2,000

Mid-spec model from the original masters of endurance road bikes

The Specialized Roubaix was born out from the demands of pro racers in famous Classic races such as Paris-Roubaix from which it takes its name. Many brands have gone on to create bikes that mimic its appeal, but few have bettered it.

The biggest selling point of the Roubaix is the Zertz vibration-damping inserts in both the seatstays and fork. The viscoelastic dampers are designed to absorb the worst of the vibrations from the road and give a more comfortable ride. Our ride soon persuades us that they work, especially in combination with the odd-looking, but brilliant CG-R carbon seatpost – we'd even go so far to say that this particular bike is one of the most comfortable we've ever ridden.

Our first impressions on riding are a tad surreal, with the feeling of floating across poor road surfaces. We found ourselves purposely looking for rougher sections of roads to ride across just to see how well it coped, and even on off-road tracks it did a great job of soaking up the rough stuff. It is no wonder this frame design has won so many Paris-Roubaix titles across the arduous cobble terrain.

Comfort aside, the bike still manages to deliver a fair climbing and sprinting performance, though it does lack the immediacy of the Merida and Eastway. The wheels are the lightest of the three bikes on test, and although this is obvious when climbing, they show more flex than either of them.

The riding position is high, but not in the clouds – combined with a slack head angle, you feel like you're sitting back a little. This encourages higher speeds on the downhills, but means the bike has a tendency to wander wide until you adjust and compensate.

Components are mostly Shimano Ultegra. The TURN Zayante chainset is solid and stiff and fits the all-black colour scheme, but its wide stance meant our tester suffered from heel rub on the crank arms. Like the Merida, the Roubaix has mounts for mudguards if you want to fit them.

While not quite as eye-catching as the Merida, the blacked-out Roubaix will appeal to stealth fans, and has some nice touches, like visible carbon weave peeking through the paintwork.



The Specialized Roubaix has great pedigree in pro races

**GOOD**

■ **Comfort** A magic carpet ride quality means it's the most comfortable of our trio.

■ **Confidence** The sublime ride really improves rider confidence at all times, but especially on rougher roads.

**NOT SO GOOD**

■ **Internal cables** Annoying rattles show up on bad surfaces.

■ **Slow handling** Tendency to wander wide on downhill.

■ **Fork disc clearance** Tight clearance may be a problem if you ride wet and muddy roads.



PRICE: £2,000

WEIGHT: 8.7kg (size 54)

FRAME: Specialized FACT Carbon frame and disc fork

GROUPSET: Shimano Ultegra 6800

BRAKES: Shimano R785

CHAINSET: TURN Zayante, 50/34

CASSETTE: Shimano 105, 11-32

BARS: Specialized Comp

STEM: Specialized Comp

SADDLE: Specialized Body Geometry Phenom Comp

SEATPOST: Specialized CG-R FACT carbon

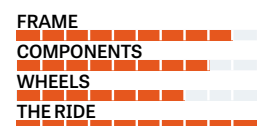
WHEELS: Specialized Axis 4.0 Disc

TYRES: Specialized Turbo Pro, 26c

CONTACT specialized.com

**CONCLUSION**

The Roubaix SL's unbeatable trump card is its comfort levels, making long rides, and rougher roads, far more enjoyable. It offers good component choices and great value for money. It's easy to see why this bike has remained so popular – as comfort doesn't come at the expense of performance. 🚴

Rating

OVERALL
8.9
10



Eastway Zener D1

Awesome build and geometry make the Zener our pick of the bunch



Testing the trio of bikes proved to be huge fun, with plenty of challenging roads ridden and even off-road sections to really see how capable they were. In terms of comfort and ability, they won us over and surprised us with just how capable a standard road bike can be when ridden off-road.

The Merida looks fantastic and offers a good blend of comfort and speed, but it can't quite match the component spec of the others – and the enormous head tube means that for some riders it will be particularly tricky trying to find a comfortable riding position.

The Specialized Roubaix wowed us with its comfort, and if that's a key consideration, then it may be the perfect bike. While it's still capable of a quick turn of speed, it lacked the zip of the other two options. It's also the most expensive, but is still good value for money.

The Eastway Zener impressed on paper and even more so when riding. The balance between speed and comfort is a tricky one, but it achieves it. Not only is it the cheapest on test, it has a better component selection, too. It might not score quite as highly as the others for comfort, but we found it more than adequate even on the roughest sections – and it was easily the most fun to ride. It might be early in 2016, but we reckon the Zener could already be a contender for bike of the year. 🚴

EASTWAY ZENER D1 £1,800



FRAME
COMPONENTS
WHEELS
THE RIDE

OVERALL
9.1
10

MERIDA RIDE DISC 5000 £1,900



FRAME
COMPONENTS
WHEELS
THE RIDE

OVERALL
8.3
10

SPECIALIZED ROUBAIX SL COMP DISC £2,000



FRAME
COMPONENTS
WHEELS
THE RIDE

OVERALL
8.9
10



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'IT WAS THE MOST PAIN I'VE EVER BEEN IN'

Doctors thought he'd never race again, but Taylor Phinney's return from career-threatening injury is the stuff of legends

WORDS **DAVID KENNING**



I can remember everything clearly,' says Taylor Phinney. 'We were coming down this descent in Chattanooga, Tennessee. I was leading. I was going pretty fast – it's a really fast descent. There was one corner that I had to watch out for but if I took the right line it would be fine...'

It was 26th May 2014, the event the USA national road race championships. Still only 23 years old, the BMC Racing Team pro was rapidly establishing himself as a star of world cycling and his season had got off to a great start, with overall victory at the Dubai Tour and a stage win at the Tour of California. ➔



Phinney came off at close to 60mph. Here he is with the guard rail that stopped him

Having won the time-trial two days earlier, Phinney started the road race as strong favourite. The 102.8-mile course included four gruelling ascents of Lookout Mountain – with a long, twisting descent down the other side where riders could hit speeds approaching 60mph. And it was on the very first of these descents that disaster struck.

'It just so happens that right before that corner there was a commentary motorcycle driver who wasn't paying as much attention as maybe he should have,' he continues. 'It was really early in the race but, still, I had to go around him and that impeded my set-up. I ended up sliding out and hit a guard rail. I took all of the force on my left leg, on my knee and below my knee, on my tibia.'

Falling off is an everyday hazard for pro cyclists, but Phinney instantly knew that this time it was serious. 'I was in the most pain that I've ever been in, you know, in my life. And I figured based on that sensation that I had done something extremely wrong,' he says. 'I sat there slightly stunned and had time to wonder if I'd just ended my career.'

Compound fracture

While doctors didn't openly confirm these fears, they weren't optimistic, and it's not hard to see why – Phinney had suffered an open compound fracture of the tibia (shinbone) and severed patellar tendon in his left leg, as well as losing a chunk of his kneecap. 'The way that they talked about my recovery was definitely in a tone that implied I might not be able to race again,' Phinney tells *BikesEtc*. 'Saying things like, "I want to see a picture of you when you're able to ride your bike again." As if the end of the recovery was just me being able to ride my bike.'

But Phinney is a born fighter, as he'd already shown in some memorable moments in his fledgling career. At the London Olympics in 2012, aged just 22, he came within a bike's length of medal glory in the road race, thumping his handlebars in frustration as he crossed the line in fourth place behind Norway's Alexander Kristoff. His drive and desire to succeed became even more apparent the following spring, at the Tirreno-Adriatico stage race in Italy. The 209km sixth stage was littered with short, but brutally steep climbs, including some sections at 30%. Not being a natural climber, Phinney's best bet was to ride with the *gruppetto*, those stragglers

'They way they talked to me about my recovery implied that I'd never race ever again'



Phinney put a cartoon Frankenstein transfer on his leg to go with over 100 tiny stitches

who stick together in a bunch at the back of the race. But as the weather deteriorated, riders abandoned the race in droves, leaving Phinney to complete the final 120km alone in icy wind and heavy rain. He finished nearly 38 minutes behind stage winner Peter Sagan – and outside the time limit, resulting in elimination from the race. How on earth do you even keep going in those conditions?

'I dunno,' Phinney admits. 'I think a lot of it started from being stubborn, which can be a good thing, and then also being able to find a certain level of inspiration that then turns into ambition. And putting things into the kind of context that's outside what you're actually doing. You know, considering other people, considering your family. The main thing in that Tirreno stage is that I was thinking about my dad the whole time, and then I was like, well, I can't stop now!'

Talented genes

As a star of the 7-Eleven team in the '80s, Phinney's dad Davis Phinney was only the second American to win a stage of the Tour de France, and a natural inspiration to his son. 'My dad was very much a competitor, loved that feeling of winning, was always chasing that feeling and always trying to prove himself as an American in a European sport. So when I came into the sport, I started winning and was thinking, "Yeah, dad, I totally get this!" I want to chase this rush, I want to be that guy.' Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease aged 40, Phinney Snr established a charitable foundation in 2005 to help and inspire people living with the disease, and his drive to overcome its debilitating effects are a continuing source of motivation for his son.

'It's hard to find that kind of inspiration, but the ability to look inwards... it's not even related to cycling. It's something that I did a lot in the year and a half that I was out with the injury, that inward kind of discovery.'

Not that Phinney found it easy to cope with his enforced spell out. Any keen cyclist who ➔



Making his comeback for Team USA at the UCI Road World Championships in Richmond, Virginia, September 2015



BOUNCING BACK

Taylor Phinney's tips for returning from injury

FIND OTHER THINGS TO DO

Use your enforced time off your bike to explore other opportunities and to broaden your horizons. 'I got into some very different things,' Phinney revealed to *BikesEtc.* 'I started to paint, I started flying planes, all sorts of stuff.' You can see some of his artworks online. We're no art critics, but we rather like them!

KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOUR

'Humour's another thing that's entirely your choice,' Phinney says. 'You can either take yourself way too seriously and really be emotionally invested in your situation, or you can continue to poke fun at it.' Phinney posted a revealing picture online of a kids' Frankenstein transfer on his scarred leg (see picture in top left).

LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE

Rather than focussing on the pain of injury, Phinney suggests using it as a learning experience. 'You start to use your brain and question why something hurts, and what makes it hurt,' he explains. 'It's a sort of experiment—you're kind of trying to see how you can overcome this puzzle, put all these pieces back together.'

GET BACK ON THE BIKE ...AND SOON

Follow Phinney's great example and look into the space for reflection cycling creates. 'One aspect that I really liked about the bike, when I was coming back, was that you get out and parts of your brain light up more than if you're just sitting around trying to think about things, so it sort of directly facilitates that kind of introspection.'

BREAK THE PAIN BARRIER

'Once I was able to start going hard, I really experienced the mental freedom of the harder I go, the less I can process anything. There's something beautiful about being more in the moment of what you're doing, but using pain as a way to do that.' In other words, ride so hard you can't think about how much it hurts!



is kept off the bike for a spell will know just how frustrating it can be, so imagine how hard it must be for a pro. 'It was toughest in the first couple of months because I was still really fixated on the season,' Phinney recalls. 'I was really strong when I crashed and was dreaming of riding my first Tour de France, and so I spent a couple of months still in touch with the cycling world. I realised that was what was causing most of my depression. The 2014 USA Pro Challenge came through Boulder, and [the final stage] started out in front of my apartment. I was like, OK, this makes me sad, I've just got to remove myself and stop looking at cycling news websites.'

Getting away from the sport included his team-mates. 'I didn't talk much with a lot of the guys on the team, but I had some really solid support. The first person I heard from after the crash was Samuel Sánchez [Spanish winner of the 2008 Olympic road race], who I hadn't even met yet, but I thought it was cool that he was offering his kind words.' Another who was in regular contact was Italian veteran Manuel Quinziato. 'He was checking in on me a lot, making sure I was OK. He's since gotten into Buddhism and does a lot of meditating, which is cool, so we connect on that.'

But Phinney's main focus during his recovery was away from the world of pro cycling. 'I looked more at other aspects of life and less at the sports side of my life because it had been so dominant for so long,' he explains. 'Having been around people who push through physical barriers in bike races, that was something I hadn't considered before and it was hugely inspiring.'

Character forming

Being off the bike brought out another side to Phinney's character. 'Through my injury I discovered that I'm a lot more like my mom.' Connie Carpenter-Phinney was also a successful pro cyclist, taking to the sport after injury curtailed a successful speed-skating career (she competed at the 1972 Winter Olympics aged just 14). 'She was more physically gifted than my dad and I think that allowed her mental space to want and desire other things out of her life than just be an athlete, so she retired when she was 27, the day after she won an Olympic gold medal at Los Angeles [in 1984], to do something else.'

Her example encouraged Phinney to broaden his world view. 'I just stopped following along and hung out with some

'I first got outside two months after the crash – it was before I was allowed to, but I just wanted to ride my bike!'

TAYLOR PHINNEY TIMELINE

► MARCH 2009

Takes USA's only gold at the UCI Track World Championship, winning the individual pursuit. It's a feat he repeats the following year.

► SEPTEMBER 2010

Wins the individual time trial at the USA National Championships. Ten days later, he adds the U23 time trial title at the UCI Road World Championships.

► AUGUST 2011

Now with BMC Racing Team, he starts his first Grand Tour, the Vuelta, taking fifth spot in the time trial.

► MAY 2012

Wins the opening stage of the Giro d'Italia, and holds onto the *maglia rosa* for the next two stages.

► JULY 2012

Finishes fourth in both individual time trial and road race at the London Summer Olympics.

► MAY 2013

Stubbornly finishes stage 6 of Tirreno-Adriatico outside the time limit, riding the final 120km solo after the *gruppetto* of 55 riders abandon the race in appalling conditions.

► FEBRUARY 2014

Wins a stage and overall victory at the Dubai Tour

► MAY 2014

Wins the individual time trial at the USA national championships, crashing out of the road race two days later.

► AUGUST 2015

After 15 months out, he returns to racing at the Tour of Utah, taking third place on the 212km opening stage. Then two weeks later, he wins stage one of the USA Pro Challenge.

► SEPTEMBER 2015

Is part of the six-man, BMC Racing Team squad that wins the team time trial at the UCI Road World Championships, and is back to his best!

what he did. 'A lot of people say they know their body better than a doctor but we, as athletes, are so in tune with ours because we've had to obsess over them for so long that I was like, if I can do this kind of power inside, I can do this outside on a flat road. And so long as I'm safe and take the necessary precautions, I can get out there. I wasn't able to move around much as I was on crutches, but being able to ride my bike was *massive*.

In those early stages of rehabilitation, Phinney was recommended to keep his power output below 150 watts. 'Being 80-plus kilos, that's pretty easy for me to hit,' he adds. This forced him to look at riding a bike in a completely new way. 'It felt weird. When I got into cycling I started racing immediately and experiencing success. When I was racing, my driving factor was that I like to win. I saw my training as this vehicle for success rather than as a vehicle for freedom or a transportational device, which is what a bike is.'

Rather than feeling restricted by his physical limitations, Phinney's philosophical mindset helped him see the positives. 'I was riding my bike purely for fun. I was riding my bike in a different way than I had ever done before, in more of a freeing than a training way. I was able to process a lot of things.'



All this may sound somewhat strange to non-pros, but there's still plenty we can take from Phinney's experience in our own approach to overcoming cycling injury. 'There's a heightened mind state that's involved in being injured and you choose exactly what that state is. It can be sadness, or you can see it as this opportunity to learn, to grow, to be patient with yourself, and build to on everything that you know as a human, really challenge everything that you've learned over the course of your life,' he says.

'I strengthened a lot of relationships in my life through the crash, through the recovery. You know, that sense of connectedness, not only with people who I love, people who were really supportive and wanted to help, but also that sense of connectedness with myself.'

'Mentally, it's a lot to handle and to put into perspective,' he adds. 'But if you're getting →



Phinney escapes a pile-up involving team-mate Greg Van Avermaet at Paris-Roubaix 2014

friends, got into some other stuff, ended up doing a lot of meditation and exercises that were in essence meditative, much like riding a bike can be. I love cycling for what it does for my brain, and the kind of avenues that you can open up, and I like to look ahead, after my cycling career, to something different,' he says. 'I started painting. I started to fly planes. I really got philosophical about a lot of things, started to think about what I would be doing if I wasn't a professional cyclist, stuff like that.'

Back on the bike

Phinney is in no doubt that the injury and rehabilitation process changed him as a person, but that instinctive desire to win never left him, and incredibly, he was back in the saddle within weeks of the crash. 'I was on a stationary recumbent a couple of weeks afterwards, with some very small range of motion, no resistance. Then in June, a month afterwards, I was sitting on a stationary bike with a shorter crank in order to restrict the range of motion. But that was inside. The first time I got outside was two months after the crash. It was before I was allowed to, but I just wanted to get out of there and ride my bike.

So, against to medical advice, that's exactly



After a solo breakaway, Phinney holds off a chasing pack to win the 4th stage of 2013's Tour of Poland

better every day, you're making forward progress. That's all you can really ask for in life – even if you're not injured, you're trying to be a little bit better every single day. And [getting over] injury is a good way of your body telling you that it's getting better every single day.'

Despite his positive outlook, getting back into training wasn't that easy to begin with. Before the crash, winning races seemed almost instinctive for Phinney, as he ably demonstrated with his stage win at the Tour of California in early 2014, breaking away from the pack in the closing stages.

Return to glory

'I don't remember really weighing any options, I kind of just went for it,' he recalls. 'And then once I was out there, it was like, OK, well now you can either commit to it or not to and I figured I was out there, so I may as well commit to it, and it worked out. I figured if there was anybody who could do it, I could.'

Returning to training largely involved rediscovering what his recovering body was capable of. 'I was on an interesting track before I had the accident, I was starting to "figure it out", how to navigate being a professional athlete, believing in what I could accomplish, and then the crash just amplified that even more over the course of a year and a half of recovery,' Phinney explains. 'I was more aware of discrepancies between my legs, but I knew that I was strong enough to be competitive, as I knew that I only set limits on myself as a choice. When I came back, I was more conscious of that choice, whereas before I was maybe more confident in my ability, but not aware that confidence was a choice.'

'Coming right back from that crash made me realise I can do anything I really want'

The choice Phinney made was to believe in himself. 'Before the crash, the only thing I was worried about was if I was overweight or if I wasn't fit enough. But when you move past that and you're dealing with one of your legs not working as well as the other, then you get deep on that in your mind, and you're like, hold on, I can do anything if I really want to.'

That belief paid off in style when Phinney finally made his return to racing in August 2015, taking third place in the opening stage of the Tour of Utah. As if that weren't impressive enough, the fairytale comeback got its happy ending less than two weeks later when Phinney returned to his home state of Colorado for the USA Pro Challenge.

On the uphill closing straight of the opening stage, an explosive sprint saw him power away from the pack to victory,

celebrating arms aloft with a roar that revealed deep emotions. He was back.

Talking to *BikesEtc* from the BMC pre-season training camp in Spain, Phinney reflects on the win. 'It meant a lot to me to see how excited my family was and all of the people who helped in my rehabilitation. Obviously, the sensation of winning again was incredible, but the afterglow is how everybody else feels about it. The best part is right when you cross the line. That moment is fleeting, but it lives on in the eyes of others.'

Going for gold

So while his fans may enjoy revisiting his win on YouTube, the man himself is focused on his targets for 2016. 'I might end up doing the Giro this year, so I would miss the national championships. I love racing in the US and I'd love to be able to win that road race and race the whole year with the national champion's jersey. Right now I'm looking at the Olympics and trying to win an Olympic medal.'

As our preview in last month's *BikesEtc* showed, it's going to be a tough race in Rio this August. 'It's definitely gonna be hard,' Phinney agrees, 'but the Olympics is a strange race. It works for a guy like myself who can adapt better than some of the Europeans for the Olympics – because you take the Euros out of Europe and it's a game changer, as they're far out of their comfort zone.'

Still only 25, the wild highs and lows of Phinney's short career have shown that he's a man who doesn't need the luxury of a comfort zone to win races, and less than two years after the crash that nearly ended his career, who would bet against him taking gold? 🚴



"TRON-LIKE
COOL"
Cyclist

9/10
BikesEtc

9/10
road.cc


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OUTSMART THE DARK

Don't lose months to the winter gloom.
Toughen up and embrace the darkness

WORDS **JOSEPH DELVES** PHOTOGRAPHY **ANTHONY PEASE**



700 lumens is a sensible starting point for a light that'll let you ride safely on unlit roads. If you want to go faster, something brighter is a good idea

Early humans crawled back to their caves the moment the sun went down, leaving the night to nocturnal creatures better evolved to suit the long hours of darkness. Sadly, millennia later, most cyclists are still doing the same. While nothing compared to the residents of the Arctic Circle who have to put up with nights lasting six weeks at a time, there are still many months in the UK where the sun is gone long before you've escaped work. Unless you want to lose these months to the horror of inactivity, or worse still the gym, you're going to have to overcome your fear and venture out into the darkness.

Luckily, thanks to modern technology, there's no reason why riding at night shouldn't

be both safe and fun. Quality lights are now so bright there's no excuse for drivers not to see you. Some even outperform motorbike lights, so you need to be careful not to dazzle oncoming traffic. And with a powerful rear light too, vehicles coming from behind have an even greater chance of noticing you before they pass than during daylight hours.

One rider who knows more than most about late nights in the saddle is Josh Ibbett. Last summer he won the brutal Transcontinental race from Belgium to Istanbul, riding almost 4,000km in under 10 days and as many long nights.

'The most obvious attraction of riding at night,' Josh tells *BikesEtc*, 'is that it allows you to just keep on riding! Whether it's training through winter, commuting from work or covering more ground in a bike race, riding ➔





A helmet light is also useful for looking into the peripheries or if you need a light to assist with roadside repairs. Should your main light fail, it'll also serve as a back-up

Using a single light source will create deep shadows and make judging distances more difficult. Having a small supplementary light on your helmet will fill in the gaps



While all the roads are likely to be empty in the dead of night, that doesn't mean you're riding alone

at night prolongs the amount of time you can spend on the bike, pursuing your passion.

'There's something very special about cycling all night and watching the dawn come up,' he adds. 'I'd recommend it to anyone.'

Rolling through the darkness down a corridor of light thrown out by your own tiny sun makes night-time riding a unique pleasure. With the world either side obscured in blackness, all your attention is absorbed on the road as it emerges ahead of you. Without any visible landmarks available to locate yourself, it can be disorientating, and even the most familiar roads can seem uncannily different with the lights turned down.

'Riding at night is mentally challenging. During the day there's always the view to distract you. In the dark you have to focus on the beam of light in front of you,' Josh says.

Surrounded by trees that hide the horizon, hazarding through forests can be particularly

exhilarating. Even as adults, there's still something a little eerie about the night-time and that's what provides nocturnal riding with its unique frisson. It feels both slightly spooky and somehow illicit. With the noise and traffic of the daytime long past, your senses become acutely aware of what's going on around you, adding to the sense of solitude.

However, while the roads themselves are likely to be empty of commuters or the school run, that doesn't mean you'll be riding alone.

'You see some remarkable wildlife at night,' says Josh. 'Barn owls, badgers, stoats, bats and other nocturnal animals. Farm animals can be scary though, especially cows. One minute you're cycling through an empty field and the next second all the cows turn their heads to look at you and the lights reflect off their eyes and scares the crap out of you!'

Although it's nice to admire nature from a distance, keeping away from the verge and



Temperatures drop sharply after dark, even if it's been warm in the daytime, so make sure you carry a few extra layers of clothing to keep insulated and beware of frost patches forming on the road

GO RIDE THESE!

Three of the best all-night cycling events



1

Dunwich Dynamo

Saturday 16 July, free to enter
southwarkcyclists.org.uk

A loosely arranged bike ride starting in East London and rolling to the Suffolk coast. It takes place on the Saturday nearest the full moon in July. There's a food stop halfway, and you can book a coach to bring you and your bike back to town. Ending on the picturesque beach at Dunwich, skinny-dipping at the finish is optional, but a fried breakfast in the café is considered mandatory. With over 1,000 participants, it's a fun group ride.



2

Exmouth Exodus

Date TBC, free to enter
exmouthexodus.co.uk

Also taking place in July and run along similar lines to the Dynamo, the Exodus leaves Bath via the Two Tunnels Greenway before traversing the Mendips via Cheddar Gorge and ending up at the seafront in Exmouth 106 miles later. A degree of self-reliance and a spirit of adventure are the only entry requirements.



3

Dunoon Full Moon Cycle

Saturday 18 June, entry from £30
dunoondynamo.co.uk

Taking place one of the shortest nights of the year, just before the summer solstice, this ride ends with a barbecue on the beach the following morning. Starting in Glasgow and skirting the lochs and coastline of the Trossachs national park, it ends with a ferry ride across the Clyde with three different routes covering 77, 89 and 109 miles.



Ideally, just stick to the routes you know. Tell someone where you're going and be sure to take a phone and tools with you. Better still, why not bring a friend along?

riding in the centre of the lane will ensure that none of it ends up directly under your wheels.

Not all riders are quite as tough as a solo artist such as Josh. For most, the best accessory to take on a night ride is likely to be a companion. Not only is there safety in numbers, but also you're less likely to get spooked if you have someone along for company. Even if you can't find a friend brave enough to come out with you, year-on-year there's an increasing number of nocturnal events popping up in the cycling calendar.

For over 20 years, the Saturday nearest the full moon in July has marked the start of the Dunwich Dynamo – the UK's most famous overnight ride. Run with minimal organisation and an emphasis on self-reliance, it follows in the tyre tracks of a handful of couriers who decided to ride the 116 miles from east London to the Suffolk coast one evening in 1993. It's still free ➔



to take part, and last year over 1,000 riders joined in the sociable, nocturnal fun.

'With the town behind you the darkness rapidly takes over,' explains writer Ava Szajna-Hopgood, who rode the Dunwich Dynamo for the first time in 2015. 'Entering Epping Forest at around 10 miles out, the reality of what lies ahead quickly sets in.'

With little signage, people living alongside the route have taken to leaving out jam jars holding tea lights to mark the way. They're a welcome reminder – each flickering candle letting the riders know they're still on the right track as the miles pass by.

'Some stretches seem to last an eternity in the darkness, and by 2am the halfway pit-stop is quite a surreal sight, with hundreds of cyclists laid out on the ground in a deserted village,' says Ava.

As the night wears on and fatigue begins to gradually set in, the flicker of red tail-lights on the road ahead become a comforting sight, as riders group together for company.

'The tiny shining red dots out in front lead off for miles into the distance. The desire not to lose sight of them not only helps you power

Why not round up some friends and head off into the unknown in search of adventure?



A bike set-up for winter riding is ideal. Wide, puncture-resistant tyres help with unforeseen potholes, while lower pressures smooth out the tarmac and increase grip

Go easy on the descents. A light illuminating 30 metres of road will be fine for rolling along on the flat, but reactions and stopping times will suffer if you let loose on the hills

NIGHT RIDER

Stock up on the kit to keep you safe after hours

Bright rear light

Your rear guard. Most back lights will go far longer between charges than their front-facing counterparts.

WE RECOMMEND: Bontrager Flare R, £45, trek.com

Saddlepack

Ensure you have everything you need to repair common mechanicals. Pack spare chain links, a multitool, inner tubes, a pump and tyre levers.

WE RECOMMEND: Lezyne M Caddy QR, £22, upgradebikes.co.uk

Wider tyres

Swapping tubes and hitting potholes at night sucks. So swap to wider, puncture-resistant tyres to increase grip and decrease flats.

WE RECOMMEND: Continental GatorSkin DuraSkin Tyres, £38, cambriantires.co.uk

Small helmet-mounted light

To help you look around and to act as a back-up should your main light run out.

WE RECOMMEND: Niterider Lumina OLED 800, £130, 2pure.co.uk

Main light

A quality front light pumping out at least 700 lumens. Be careful to fix it so as not to dazzle oncoming drivers.

WE RECOMMEND: Hope, R4+ LED, £235, hopetech.com

High-viz gloves

A bright rear light should leave drivers with no excuses for missing you, but high-viz gloves will help get you noticed while indicating.

WE RECOMMEND: Gore Windstopper Power Gloves, £40, goreapparel.co.uk



**Try to avoid
rush hour as
even in the
countryside,
roads will be
at their busiest**



through. They also indicate what's ahead. When they float above eye-height, you know it's time to curse another hill. When they dip it means it's time to freewheel.'

The distance combined with the fact that most riders will have been awake for approaching 24 hours means the day breaks long before most reach the beach.

'Cycling through to daylight is a favourite part,' says Ava. 'I'd forgotten about that kind of light you only glimpse when you're camping or waking up well before dawn. We talked through sunrise until about 5am, by which time I was pedalling for the promise of coffee – and coffee alone!'

Not all night rides need be as arduous – or as long – as the Dynamo, although the attractions are the same. It's not easy to go on an adventure without venturing somewhere new, but even if you decide to stay close to home, that's just what night riding can be.

So rather than sitting on your backside or wasting hours on the turbo trainer through winter's chilly, damp and unwelcome evenings, why not round up some friends along with a few sets of lights and head off into the unknown in search of an adventure? Unless, that is, you're still scared of the dark. 🚴

How to fix a broken cyclist

Save the day with our simple post-crash checklist and become a cycling superhero

WORDS JOSEPH DELVES
PHOTOGRAPHY JENNI LESKINEN



Even small bangs to the head, especially glancing blows, can cause rider concussion

Everyone has an accident-prone friend and ours is called Dave. Following him at a distance into a blind bend, we heard the crash before we saw it. The skittering noise of tyres scrabbling for grip and a loudly exclaimed swearword, cut short as he hit the tarmac. Clearing the turn, we found Dave lying in the road looking very sorry for himself. As we jumped off our bikes to help him, it occurred to us that without so much as a Boy Scout first-aid badge between the group, we'd all feel a lot better if one of us knew how

to properly deal with the situation – as nobody wanted to make it any worse.

Ashley Sweetland is the man responsible for St John Ambulance's team of over 150 cycle responders. Based across the country and covering both the Tour of Britain and the Ride London-Surrey 100, one of his teams could be responsible for putting you back together if you take a spill on your bike. He seemed the ideal man to come to for expert advice...

'Using bikes makes it easy to navigate congested urban environments or events ➤



where vehicular access is restricted – like races or sportives held on closed roads – meaning, if there is a crash, we're often the first people on the scene,' he explains.

Seeing someone in trouble, your instinct is to spring to their aid, but take it slowly.

'After coming across someone in the road, it's important to first take a moment to ensure the scene is safe,' explains Sweetland.

HOW TO HELP SAFELY

Anyone who has watched enough racing on television will probably have at some point seen a team car turn up to help a stricken rider only to have someone following plough into the back of them. Especially at big events, it's important to be aware that your presence could also cause further accidents. On open roads, the prime danger is likely to come from traffic or other riders. 'Enlist someone to alert traffic or place an upturned bicycle ahead of and behind the scene. At night, you can also use your lights as a warning,' he explains. If they're not being employed to cordon off the area, quickly get your bikes out of the road.

The next thing to decide is if the rider can be moved. 'The mechanism of injury is crucial here,' says Sweetland. If you've witnessed the rider taking a slow-speed fall and they're conscious, not in excessive pain and can explain their injury, it's probably safe for them to get up and out of the road. 'Crashes at higher speed or those involving collisions are more complex,' he explains. You should talk to the rider. If you suspect more serious injuries, head or spinal injuries that would prevent moving them, or if they're unconscious, enlist other people to secure the area and call an ambulance for professional assistance.

If the rider is out for the count, check their response. Call their name, try talking to them and tap them on the shoulder. If they're unconscious, check their breathing by placing your cheek against their nose and mouth. If they're not breathing, instantly get started with CPR. Otherwise, move them into the recovery position. Information on how to do this and also deal with a range of common cycling injuries is available from the St John First Aid for Cyclists app (free to download from sja.org.uk). It's great for brushing up on your skills and having it on your phone means all the info will be to hand in an emergency.

Luckily, most incidents aren't so grave. 'The majority of accidents we see at cycling events aren't serious, usually consisting of cuts and scrapes,' explains Sweetland. However, one thing worth checking for, even after a minor prang, is the possibility of concussion. Crashes are confusing events, sending you higgledy-piggledy down the road. Even small bangs to the head, especially glancing blows, can cause concussion.

While it's tempting to channel your inner Tom Simpson and get straight back on your bike, doing so could put both yourself and anyone you're riding with at risk. If you suspect a rider might have concussion, sit them down for a chat and try and work out if they're suffering from any of the 'Danger sign' symptoms (right). If so, get medical help.

DANGER SIGNS

Symptoms of possible concussion

- + BRIEF LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS
- + SCALP WOUND
- + DIZZINESS OR NAUSEA
- + LOSS OF MEMORY OF EVENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE INJURY
- + HEADACHE
- + CONFUSION
- + PUPILS ROLLING OR OF UNEQUAL SIZE



While you frequently see banged-up pros rolling over the finish-line at professional races, the ethics of letting riders continue if they've sustained a concussion are questionable. If you suspect you or someone you're riding with has sustained one, seek an expert medical opinion immediately.

Even if you've dusted yourself off and everything seems fine, it's still worth taking a couple of minutes out. Medical shock is a serious condition, but almost any crash can be shocking in the emotional sense. Floods of adrenaline, increased heart rate and shaking limbs aren't a great combination if you want to make rational decisions while riding in a bunch or beside traffic. 'Take some time out, maybe have a drink, and decide whether you're feeling 100% and want to continue or whether to call it a day,' Sweetland advises.

After dusting yourself off, it's still worth taking a few minutes out

BE PREPARED

It's annoying when you get a puncture and no one in the group's bought a pump because everyone assumed the next person would have one, right? Well, imagine being on a ride where someone breaks a leg and no one in your group has even basic first aid. So why not boost your confidence and look out for yourself and your mates by enrolling in a first-aid course? Luckily, cycling is a relatively low-risk activity, but as every good Scout knows, it's still good to be prepared.



How to get trained for free

Even though businesses aren't always obliged to have a trained first-aider on site, they are legally required to 'appoint a person to take charge of first-aid arrangements'. So why not put yourself forward and ask your employer to pay for a one-day course? Almost all of what's covered will also be useful when out on the bike. See sja.org.uk/training

Emergency Checklist



The DR ABC checklist can help you remember what to do in the event of an accident

- + DANGER** Make the area safe.
- + RESPONSE** Check if the casualty is conscious, call their name or tap their shoulders to elicit a response.
- + AIRWAY** Keep the airways open.
- + BREATHING** Check they're breathing by placing your cheek above their mouth/nose. If they're not breathing, attempt resuscitation. If they're breathing, place them in the recovery position.
- + CALL** 999 for an ambulance
- + KEEP THE CASUALTY WARM AND MAKE THEM COMFORTABLE.**
 - Remove the casualty's cycling helmet if they don't have a head/neck/back injury.
 - Don't remove gloves on injured fingers – they may be supporting broken bones.
 - Avoid giving the casualty drinks in case they need to have an operation. You can moisten their lips with water.
 - If they complain of back or neck pain, keep them still and in the same position, as they could be at risk of spinal injury.



TURN FOR THREE
OF THE BEST
FIRST-AID KITS



Three top kits for cyclists

Fancy carrying more than a few plasters?
Here are three of the best first-aid kits...



ORTLIEB FIRST-AID-KIT BIKE

£46 ortlieb.com

A great kit to carry between a group of riders, and fixings on the back mean it can be attached to the bike or other bags. This expansive kit has enough to rebuild any rider from scratch and being Ortlieb, the case is likely to outlast the owner. Weighs 570g.



LIFESYSTEMS LIGHT & DRY MICRO FIRST AID KIT

£12.50 madison.co.uk

Housed in a slim waterproof bag, this tiny kit is small enough to slip in a jersey pocket, yet sufficiently tough to survive years of carrying. It contains enough to clean and close most wounds, along with some useful painkillers. It's also the lightest, at just 162g.



VAUDE FIRST AID KIT BIKE WATERPROOF

£22 vaude.com

Along with the regular wound dressings, gloves, scissors and enough bandages to construct a sling, this medium-sized kit also contains a rescue blanket to keep the victim warm while waiting at the roadside. Weighs just 200g.

WIN THIS STUNNING 2016 WILIER GTR TIAGRA

WORTH
£1,299!

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- It looks fab!



BikesEtc *Wilier* TRIESTINA 

For your chance to win simply go to
bikesetc.co.uk/16wilier
and tell us what you think.

Full terms and conditions can be found at the above URL. Closing date: Monday 29 February 2016

WORLD'S TOUGHEST SPORTIVES

Want to do something amazing this year? Something you'll remember for the rest of your days? Then have a crack at one of these bad boys!

WORDS NICK SOLDINGER

So you didn't get through the pesky ballot for the Fred Whitton Challenge, and entries for L'Etape closed months ago – but you're still clanking for a mighty test this year. Something that'll push you further and higher than you've ever been before. A lung-bursting, heart-thumping sportive that'll test every fibre of your being, as well as give you real bragging rights over your cycling chums. Let us tempt you, then, with our pick of the toughest out there that are still taking entries...

THE ALPS

TOUR DU MONT BLANC

Entry from £95

What is it?

In a word, horrific! This one-dayer is 330km long and features nine climbs that total just under 9,000 metres of ascent. Ouch!

When does it start?

At dawn on 16th July in the ski resort of Les Saisies, 1,610m up in the French Alps.

How long does it go on for?

Organisers reckon the fastest will finish in 10 hours. We reckon that's a bit optimistic – it'd probably take us double that. At least!

What's the best bit?

The descents. The one down Col des Montets into Switzerland, for example. Or the one down Col du Petit St Bernard into Italy – expect to easily reach speeds of more than 50mph for long stretches!

And the toughest?

The brutal, penultimate climb at Cormet de Roselend. It's 19km long and averages 6%.

Where do I find out more?

sportcommunication.info

WEST COUNTRY**TOUR OF
WESSEX**

Entry £135

What is it?

A 538km challenge that's crammed with climbs – 7,672 metres of them to be precise.

When does it start?

At 8am on 28th May in the Anglo-Saxon town of Somerton in leafy Somerset. This is particularly fitting, as the course follows some of Britain's most ancient routes.

How long does it go on for?

Three hard days. You finish back in Somerton on 30th May, having followed circular routes that take in some of the finest scenery the UK has to offer.

What's the best bit?

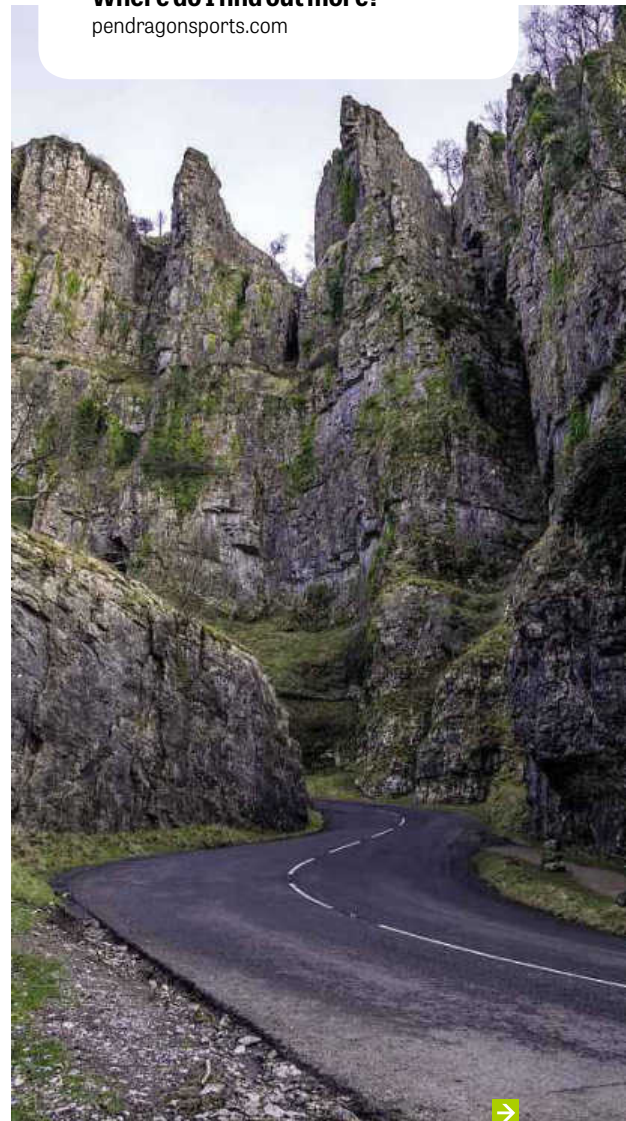
Cheddar Gorge? The Cerne Abbas Giant chalk figure carved into the Dorset hills? The views of Corfe Castle? Take your pick!

And the toughest?

The climbs on the final day are relentless, and include the notorious Porlock Toll Road.

Where do I find out more?

pendragonsports.com



NICE TO GENEVA

HAUTE ROUTE ALPS 2016

Packages from £1,230

What is it?

A seven-stage, 800km beast that starts at sea level and finishes up in the Alps.

When does it start?

Entrants will line up on Nice's Promenade des Anglais on 28th August before being set off by a flag-waving Frenchman.

How long does it go on for?

If you make it, you can expect to freewheel into Geneva on 3rd September, where you'll roll to a halt in the Jardin

Anglais bang next to splendid Lake Geneva. Simply awesome.

What's the best bit?

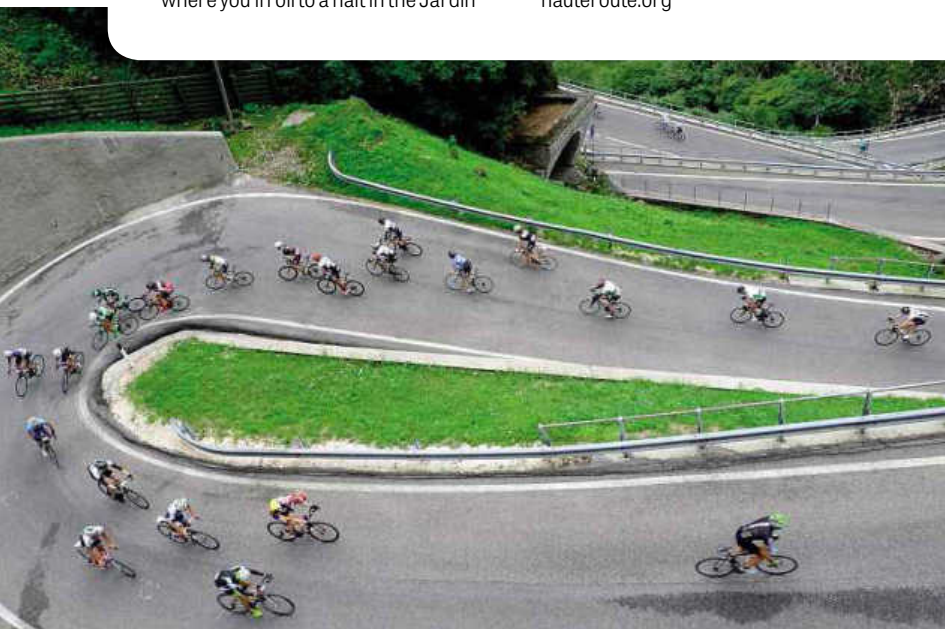
You get to tackle both sides of the fabled Col du Galibier. Something to boast about!

And the toughest?

Watch out for the 12% sections of the Lacets de Montvernier, and the Col de la Bonette at 2,700m is no pique-nique.

Where do I find out more?

hauteroute.org



UNITED KINGDOM

RIDE ACROSS BRITAIN

Packages from £1,600

What is it?

A 1,545km (yep, you read that right) monster that goes from the bottom of mainland Britain right to its very top.

When does it start?

On 10th September in Cornwall's most westerly tip at Land's End.

How long does it go on for?

Nine days. In that time you'll follow a route that will take you up the western side of the England, through Bath, past Manchester and Liverpool right up into Scotland.

What's the best bit?

Probably the last bit! After nine days in the saddle, the sense of achievement you'll feel when you roll over the finish line at John O'Groats will be possibly life changing!

And the toughest?

The last day's hills are killers. You'll need to tackle around 1,250 metres of climbing.

Where do I find out more?

rideacrossbritain.com



ITALY

MARATONA

Packages from £499

What is it?

The Maratona dles Dolomites – to give it its full name – is a mighty 140km Gran Fondo that weaves through Italy's South Tyrol.

When does it start?

On 3rd July in the ski resort of La Villa surrounded by World heritage sites.

How long does it go on for?

One day – but what a day! With 9,000 riders, this is a major event. Expect an international field, TV crews, helicopters and noisy roadside crowds.

What's the best bit?

Apart from the incredible atmosphere, the views are arguably even better than the Alps.

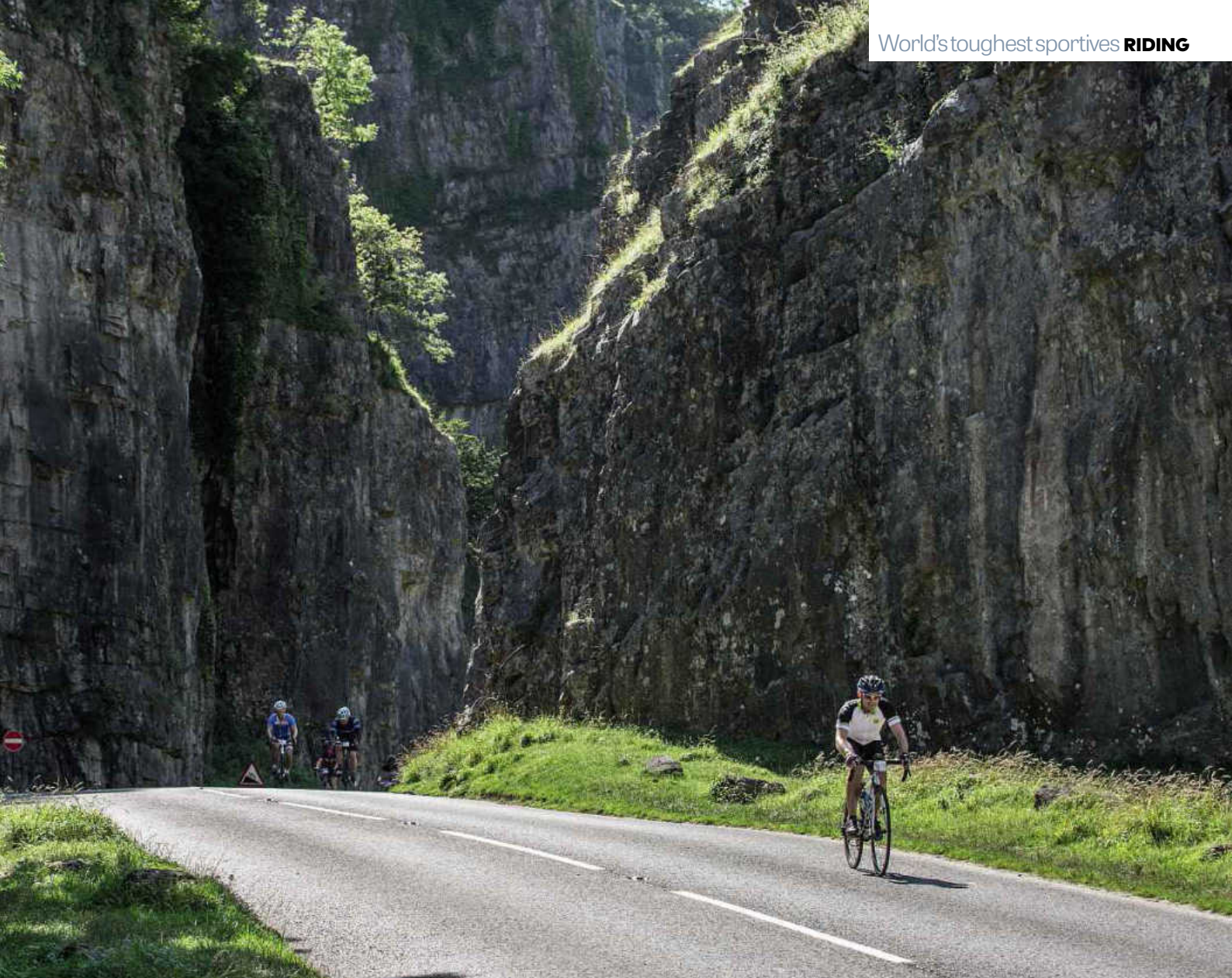
And the toughest?

The mür dl giat (cat's wall) climb comes right at the end. At 360m, it's short, but spiteful. It's got a 19% gradient!

Where do I find out more?

sportstoursinternational.co.uk





SCOTLAND

BEALACH MOR

Entry £42

What is it?

A 145km course with 2,900 metres of ascent, including Britain's highest road climb.

When does it start?

On 3rd September in Kinlochewe in Scotland's wild Highlands, 50 miles northwest of Inverness.

How long does it go on for?

It's a one-dayer that weaves its way through staggering countryside that takes in lochs, cliffs, coves and glens brilliant with heather.

What's the best bit?

The view from the top of Bealach-na-Ba is truly special, giving you an incredible vista over Scotland's west coast and Isle of Skye.

And the toughest?

Getting to the top of Bealach-na-Ba – it's 626 metres up. Tough enough at the best of times, but once you factor in the Scottish weather even in early September? Brutal.

Where do I find out more?

handsonevents.co.uk/bealach-mor 🚲



It weaves through wild countryside that takes in lochs, cliffs, and glens brilliant with heather




BEAT THE FEAR

Conquering anxiety about riding in the wet, descending and even reaching your goals will make you a stronger cyclist in 2016. And, thankfully, it's simpler than you'd think...

WORDS **JAMES WITTS** PHOTOGRAPHY **JENNI LESKINEN** ILLUSTRATION **ANDREW SUMNER**





How many of you watched *The A-Team*? Excellent. Now, who can forget the bejewelled BA Baracus (aka Mr T), a man so tough he even turned up in a Rocky film? And who can forget how such a chiselled frame of muscle would become fetal at the mere thought of sitting in a plane? It's the same in cycling – even the most hardened professional can succumb to the fear.

Take Sir Bradley Wiggins, who crashed on a treacherous rain-soaked descent during stage seven of the 2013 Giro and, near enough, tiptoed down subsequent descents before withdrawing because of a chest infection. It was the same with French rider Thibaut Pinot, who in 2013 told the French newspaper *Le Dauphiné*, 'I know that I'm tense on descents – this is my weak point.'

Pinot obviously worked on his fears, finishing third overall at the 2014 Tour de France, but it's clear that overcoming mental anxiety of certain cycling situations will have a positive physical impact. That's why we've cherry-picked a number of common cycling fears, dissected their causes and, via some of the finest sports psychologists in the land, prescribed a range of simple-to-apply cures. Time to bolster your cycling performance...

FEAR OF INJURY

CAUSES

The most common bike scenario that sends shivers down many a cyclist's aerodynamic spine is crashing on a descent. Why? 'It's damn scary!' comes the educated opinion of sports psychologist Alan Heary. But it really needn't be. Just relax and read on...

CURES

Touching 50mph on a descent can be a thrilling experience. Clearly, though, that adrenaline rush is stimulated by the potential fear of crashing. According to Heary, who not only coaxes riders to lose their fears, but also organises races – the first, most basic method of killing the fear begins with the basics. 'Skill development is key, especially if you're new to cycling. Many newcomers worry because they're inexperienced. Find a good coach. Failing that, head out with an experienced cyclist who can show you the ropes.'

Once you've engineered a proficient bike set-up, shifted your weight evenly over the bike and have nice, relaxed elbows, it's time to hit the hills. But don't look to plummet down from Alpe d'Huez as your opening salvo; instead, it's all about steady progression.

'That means rather than starting with a hill that's 5km long and 20% in places, begin with a smaller, easier hill,' explains Heary. 'You should then progress to a steeper, longer hill, each time, going slightly out of your comfort

zone. So if you feel a little nervous when descending, that's absolutely fine.'

While a few butterflies are to be expected, a fleet of Red Admirals isn't. That's where easy breathing comes in. 'Firstly, defy your natural instinct to hold your breath,' says Heary, advising deep breathing from the diaphragm. Also avoid tensing up, though clearly that's easier said than done. 'A lot of people will tell you to relax, but that's too vague – I mean, how do you gauge how relaxed you are? So I ask riders to tense up and *then* relax.'

'By deliberately tensing up their muscles, riders can easily identify what relaxing feels like, but it also puts them firmly in control. Many fears simply come down to a loss of control – and that's an easy one to remedy.'

Many big worries simply come down to a loss of control – and that's an easy one to remedy

FEAR OF FAILURE

CAUSES

Fear of failure is near omnipresent in cycling, from failing to turn up for a club run to being unable to mend a puncture. But the biggest lung-squeezer for sportive riders is failing to reach your goals.

CURES

Many of you who've raced for a few seasons or have undertaken plenty of tedious corporate training events, will be aware of SMART goal-setting. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Time-Phased, and is the go-to acronym for many a coach. It's all about deconstructing your goals to see if they're realistic and motivating.

Heary, on the other hand, recommends an alternative model to ensure your goals stretch you far enough to stimulate, but are still attainable. 'I look at the "what", "why", "why not" and "how",' he says.

The plan can delve as deeply as you like, but we'll briefly explain how each approach works. The 'what' simply applies to your goal for the year. What is it that you want to achieve? Do you want to complete an international sportive or finish in the top-

third of the Dragon Ride? As a general rule, the more specific the goal, the better.

Then it's the 'why'. 'This is the most important, but perhaps most neglected,' continues Heary. 'You must know what you're going to get out of it and what sacrifices you'll have to make. If your reason isn't strong enough, you won't be motivated to train.' In other words, you'll have more chance of reaching your goals if raising money for a cherished charity than if you'd signed up to a 300km race after 10 pints with your mate.

As for the 'why not', this is about being realistic and identifying potential hurdles along the way – be it being short of time because of a busy period at work or the inevitable cold. 'It's not all about being positive,' says Heary. 'We all have bad patches. But by recognising these potential stumbling points earlier, you reduce the fear of failure.'

Finally, the 'how'. These are the process goals, which means the steps you're going to take to reach your ultimate goals. Increasing your cadence over 60 minutes by 10rpm within a month, for example. Again, the more specific you are, the greater your chances of killing fear before it derails your goals. ➔



FEAR OF HUMILIATION

Say there are six hills. Don't just see them as one big effort, break the course into smaller components

CAUSES

As for humiliation in cycling, things go straight to the ego-jugular – namely, the fear of dismounting on a stiff climb while your mates look like mountain goats.

CURES

It's an obvious one, but if you don't analyse the course you're looking to conquer, how will you replicate its specific demands in training? In other words, if your sportive features a climb of 10km and averages 7% gradient, training for the whole time on pancake-flat roads isn't clever. Ideally, visit the course you're racing months beforehand or, more realistically, have a good gander on Google Maps.

Pacing is also key, so having a pacing plan is important. 'Obviously you'll be going a lot slower up the hills,' says sports psychologist Vic Thompson, 'so if you're used to pushing

a certain level of speed, you'll have a shock if you try to keep to that speed on the hills.'

That makes sense, but it's surprising how often us cyclists ignore the blindingly obvious in the heat of the battle. That's why Thompson says you should be as methodical as possible when approaching the ascents.

'Say there are six hills. Don't see them as one big effort. You might break the course down into those six components. Or two at a time. Or into thirds. But by doing this, you'll hopefully race in a more economical way.'

Of course, you'll be passed by a few whippets. But as long as you're confident you're racing at the right level, that's fine.

'Just remember there will be riders behind who aren't able to pass you as they're not as strong. Race at the right level for your fitness and make your peace with the suffering,' advises Thompson. That's sound advice.

FEAR OF SKIDDING

CAUSES

One minute the sun is shining and you're the master of the road; the next, the heavens open and you're transformed into a nervous wreck. Riding in the rain can upset the most balanced cyclist... without calling in some mental reinforcements.

CURES

Competence breeds confidence, and the only way you become competent at something is through repetition of good practice. So when the rain's pouring in buckets, head out with an experienced rider who can offer expert advice. These can range from using mudguards and dressing in the appropriate clothing to just pushing down slightly more than normal on the outside pedal when taking a corner. And remember, especially in the rain, that your bike follows your eyes – so look where you want to ride.

You can also talk yourself into a more confident, rain-defying version. 'Self-talk is a very useful tool, especially in situations you might fear like riding in the rain,' explains Heary. Studies support this assertion, with self-talk focusing the mind on the job at hand. Of course, there's a few principles you must observe to maximise the benefits.

'The first is to avoid being negative; avoiding saying things like "Don't skid!" or "Don't lose grip on the wet handlebars!"' explains Heary. 'This goes back to the old adage about not thinking of an elephant and its big floppy ears. What does everyone do? They think of a floppy-eared elephant.'

Instead, tell yourself what you want to do and be positive about it. That could be about riding a certain line, for instance. Find a selection of useful phrases that you feel will help you overcome specific issues and start repeating them to yourself if one should arise.'

Heary says it doesn't matter whether this self-talk's confined to your head or vocalised. However, certain social situations might make the latter a selective choice. 'I tend to vocalise unless I'm with a group of lads and don't want them to know what's going on. They also look at you a little strangely.'



FEAR OF RACE-DAY DISAPPOINTMENT

CAUSE

Not preparing properly is a common cause of race-day nerves. But there's also the other end of the preparation spectrum – if you want to win a little too much. Thankfully, both thorny issues can be cured with some mental foresight...

CURES

One of the best ways to calm yourself down when that race-day alarm clock screams into action is through visualisation. For many of you, that might sound rather whimsical. But hear out Ian Robertson, professor of psychology at Trinity College, Dublin. 'All top athletes engage in mental imagery,' he says. 'They visualise themselves and go through their routines beforehand, sometimes in real time. Using brain imaging, we discovered that almost all the same parts of the brain that are active when athletes are performing are also active when they're imagining doing so. It's only the final pathways sending signals to the muscles down the spinal cord that additionally kick in when you do it for real.'

As the brain consumes 20% of your energy, you can burn a lot of calories just visualising yourself negotiating that technical corner. Take Steve Backley, the javelin thrower. He was renowned for spending more time visualising his throw than doing it for real.

The brain uses 20% of your energy – you can burn a lot of calories through visualisation

When he injured his knee in the build-up to the Sydney Olympics, he devoted hours to visualising how he'd feel in the stadium. He'd hear the crowd in his mind, do the warm-up preparation and normal run-up and throw, all in real time. He took silver.

'It's a worthwhile exercise,' says professor Robertson. 'The higher the correspondence of your mental moves to your physical movement, the greater the mental stimulation and the better the athlete.'

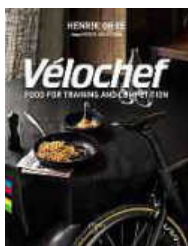
Mentally running through the whole race would be exhausting. It's far better to focus on areas of the race that bother you the most like the climbs or descents. You should devote significant time to this skill so that your strategies become automatic. It's all about harnessing raised testosterone levels and not letting them ruin your chances on race day. 🚴



EAT LIKE TEAM SKY

Team Sky's chef on how to feast like Froome for peak winter-riding performance

WORDS **CRAIG CUNNINGHAM**
PHOTOGRAPHY **PATRIK ENGSTRÖM**



Despite their opulent rides and posh kit, one thing that ties the pros to us amateurs is the need for fuel – it's one of the few relatively level playing fields left. So to get an insight into what makes the pros tick from the inside out, we called upon Team Sky chef Henrik Orre and author of Rapha's sumptuous *Vélochef* cook book to ask him how he feeds them through the

unforgiving winter months.

After a stint working for the Norwegian Cycling Federation, Henrik signing on with Team Sky in 2011. In the ever-changing world of nutrition, Henrik and his Team Sky chefs know that despite thousands of pounds worth of high-tech gear, if the riders aren't properly fuelled they won't win. It's as simple as that. Find our interview with him over the page. ➔

PRE-RIDE MEAL

Before a long winter ride (6 hours+), Chris Froome and co will snaffle both an omelette and porridge (see next page) to give them the required levels of carbs and protein. If you don't have the stomach for it, stick to a warm bowl of porridge. These simple recipes will help you eat and perform like the real pros. *Bon appétit!*

Omelette

SERVES 1

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 3 eggs
- 3 tbsp water
- Salt
- Black pepper
- 2 slices of ham

- 1 Heat a frying pan on a medium heat, add the olive oil and swirl it about
- 2 Beat the eggs and the water well in a bowl
- 3 Add salt and pepper
- 4 Pour the eggs into the frying pan and fry lightly until cooked through
- 5 Cut the ham into strips and put on the omelette

Food fact #1

An omelette provides a high level of protein and needed fats that will provide sufficient energy blocks for those long sub-maximal base miles. Porridge, meanwhile (see overleaf) is packed full of complex carbohydrates and fibre, which supplement existing glycogen stores via slow digestion. This constant production of energy helps maintain stable levels of blood glucose. Being cooked, both of these meals will be ingested more easily, and the warm feeling they provide will go a long way when it's -2°C outside.



Team Sky's Kitchen Essentials

Have these essentials at hand in your kitchen and you'll always reach for something healthy!

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Bananas | 9 Red onions |
| 2 Lemons | 10 Parsley |
| 3 Eggs | 11 Dried fruit |
| 4 Coconut oil | 12 Oats |
| 5 Wild rice (or quinoa) | 13 Nuts |
| 6 Cinnamon | 14 Agave syrup |
| 7 Fresh/dried pasta | 15 Mixed spices |
| 8 Coconut palm sugar | 16 Prunes |



BikesEtc: Hi Henrik! Nutrition in the pro peloton is evolving. What requirements do you find yourself building into meals?

Henrik: It depends a bit on the time of the year. Around this time, the pros are trying to lose weight, it's that period of the season. So carbs are not the focus. It's all about high-protein diets and vegetables. It's quite normal that they gain weight in the off-season, especially around Christmas. Now it's the time of year where they want to lose that fat. In Sky, to help focus on high protein, we have low-carb days where the pros don't have any carbs for breakfast before they go out for long-distance rides. This will be between five to six hours at a low intensity to just burn the fat off.

At Sky we always give them an option between meat and fish, serving it like a buffet. They eat such big portions it would

look ridiculous piling it on a plate – everyone might not eat it then. Serving it like a buffet means everyone can eat what they need and what they want. With vegetables, it certainly depends on the season you're in. Eating what's in season is always better so you have to adapt. We cook a lot of root vegetables, particularly celeriac. Carrots, beetroot and sweet potatoes are really nice to use, alongside butternut squash and pumpkins. We always do either meat or chicken and fish. One sort of superfood we always do is our own post-ride vegetable and fruit juices, which the riders will have with their dinner.

BE: Would you say that this kind of diet would be good for everyday riders?

Henrik: I think it's a bit too much for a normal rider who isn't racing and just wants to keep

fit. If you want to stay healthy, you should have some carbs as well. You don't need to overload on them, but you should have porridge and an omelette so you can get the mixture of both. You can't only have carbs or only protein – you need to ingest a healthy mix of both.

BE: So do any of the pros have particular requirements, or is it more down to what race conditions are going to be like?

Henrik: It depends on a lot of things which vary between individuals. It can depend on the weather and on the stages during a race. There are things we need to have in mind for these guys all the time. Before a mountain stage, say, or before a long stage – over 200km – then you really need to think of carb loading. If it's a shorter, more intense stage, you reduce carbs. It's a relatively simple process. ➔



Oat porridge

SERVES 2

- 60g oatmeal
- 300-350ml water
- 2 tbsp raisins
- 2 tbsp coconut oil
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- A pinch of salt

- 1 Bring all the ingredients to the boil on a medium heat while stirring
- 2 Let the porridge simmer for 3-4 minutes
- 3 Add some water if it looks too thick
- 4 Top the bowl up with nuts, apple and banana slices to add more flavours

IN THE SADDLE

Eating right before a ride will give you a good foundation and will help ensure you don't bonk while out on a ride. However, don't be fooled into thinking that's that. Keeping your energy level topped up is just as important as keeping your eye on the road. If you slip below a certain point, it's nigh on impossible to regain the same levels of energy as before. This is why a constant stream of sustenance is required every 20-30 minutes. Team Sky enjoys specially prepared rice cakes that provide around 25g of carbohydrates per portion. They're also super-easy to make and are perfect for all those weary gel-users and flapjack-abusers among you.

Rice bar

MAKES 20 BARS

- 500g risotto rice
- 800ml water
- 4 tbsp coconut oil
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 3 tbsp coconut palm sugar
- 300g Philadelphia cream cheese
- 100ml agave syrup

- 1 Boil the rice in the water with the coconut oil, cinnamon and coconut palm sugar
- 2 Let it boil until all the water has been absorbed
- 3 Fold the cream cheese into the rice while it's still warm
- 4 Mix in the agave syrup and blend thoroughly
- 5 Pour into a 3-litre plastic bag with a zip lock
- 6 Flatten the bag and leave in the fridge overnight
- 7 Take the bag out of the fridge and cut the rice mix into 5cm squares
- 8 Wrap the squares individually in tin foil

Tip at the end of cooking, add pistachios (a good source of healthy fats) and cranberries (high in antioxidants)



Food fact #2

When exercising, your body's need for outlandish flavours subsides and shifts towards milder tastes. Rice cakes like these will easily be to your taste while also supplying high levels of carbohydrates that are moderately high on the glycaemic index. This means they provide a quick release of energy without a sugar crash like gels and other sugar-rich products. The added cinnamon will also help your body regulate blood glucose levels, preventing severe spikes.





POST-RIDE MEAL

One way to undo all that hard work you've accomplished in the saddle is by eating the wrong food or not eating at all! One meal that will help you keep an eye on the fat while gorging on great tasting protein is this spicy, nutritious chicken casserole with celeriac and mango.

Chicken casserole

SERVES 4

- 500g chicken (boneless thigh or breast)
- Oil
- 1 red chilli
- 1 red pepper
- 1 clove garlic
- 500ml canned chopped tomatoes
- 300ml apple juice, unsweetened
- 100g celeriac
- 1 ripe mango
- 100ml low fat crème fraîche
- Salt and black pepper

- 1 Cut the chicken into small chunks and fry them in oil in a pot for a few minutes
- 2 Finely chop the chilli, pepper and garlic and put into the pot when the chicken starts to brown
- 3 Sizzle for 1-2 minutes
- 4 Add the chopped tomatoes and the apple juice
- 5 Boil for 15 minutes
- 6 In the meantime, cut the celeriac and the mango into 2cm cubes
- 7 Rapidly boil the celeriac for 1-2 minutes
- 8 Stir the celeriac gently into the pot and season with salt and pepper
- 9 Top with a dollop of crème fraîche and mango cubes

Couple this with pasta, rice (Henrik recommends wild rice) or quinoa for an all-round nutritional meal. Prepare this dish before you leave and store in the fridge, so you don't have worry about cooking after a serious session in the saddle.

Food fact #3

Protein is key to recovery and low-fat protein is an added bonus. This is where chicken excels – being high in protein and full of amino acids, it will repair your muscle tissue and won't line your waist with fat. The mango and celeriac will add fibre and antioxidants as well as valuable micro-nutrients into the mix.

BE: Races like the Paris-Roubaix are typically hard, cold and wet. What sort of food would you prepare for them?

Henrik: You would definitely carb-load for a race like that – we're talking fairly big portions of carbohydrates. For breakfast, the pros always have porridge and an omelette and depending on how long or how hard the stage is, they add carbs to their omelette, whether that's rice, pasta or quinoa. Some simply choose to have a piece of bread. We always have options for them in the morning.

BE: And what do you recommend munching on during a winter ride?

Henrik: You need to make sure you are well

fuelled for the rides, that's half the job, and to be really focussed on what you are eating during the ride as well. On almost every race, the guys need an intake of 70-75g of carbs every 30 minutes. One of our rice bars contains 20-25g of carbohydrates, and then they can drink a bottle of energy drink which would give them roughly 50g, meaning they can maintain their high-carb levels.

BE: Thanks, Henrik. Finally, what type of meal would you recommend either side of the ride?

Henrik: For long rides, you need to have a good bowl of porridge with nuts, these will add protein and a bit more fats, too. You

could have soft muesli, but it's better to have something that's cooked because your stomach will digest it much better than, say, granola. Ingesting a cooked meal means that you won't have to sit there in the saddle and feel like you have to burn it all off again.

Post-ride, you want to have a meal that's low in fat with a moderate level of carbs and is high in protein – just like my spicy chicken casserole with celeriac and mango (see left). It has chillies and mango, and is cooked in apple juice broth with tomatoes – ultimately giving you a lot of low-fat protein. You can add rice, pasta, quinoa or even sweet potatoes to it – and the stew on top is very, very good! 🚲
Vélochef by Henrik Orre is £35 from rapha.cc

WANT TO GET JUICED?

The main post-ride tippie that Chris Froome and his lieutenants will enjoy is a humble vegetable juice, but don't let that fool you. 'A lot of people think "vegetable juice – yuck!" but it actually tastes really good,' according to Orre, and by using highly nutritious vegetables such as beetroot, you can get a real edge in the saddle too.

Three Juices

APPROX 1 LITRE EACH

CARROT JUICE

- 1kg peeled carrots
- 4 peeled red apples
- 2 peeled oranges
- 50g fresh peeled ginger

CUCUMBER JUICE

- 3 cucumbers
- 1 head of broccoli
- 6 green apples
- A bunch of flat parsley

BEETROOT JUICE

- 6 peeled raw beetroot
- 500ml pineapple juice
- 5 pears

- 1 Wash fruits and vegetables carefully
- 2 Chop into smaller bits and set the juicer to work
- 3 Strain the juice when it's done. It looks much more elegant when finally poured into a glass



Food fact #4

Beetroot juice is one of the best fluids to drink if you are looking to improve your performance. Packed with nitrates, this little red ruby enhances blood flow to muscles and can reduce the amount of oxygen needed to ride at a sub-maximal level. It's like nature's very own EPO – you should try it.

PLUS Visiting the toilet the next day will always be an interesting affair with beetroot – see cyclist.co.uk/17Cavtweet

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**SHIPS IN 4 WEEKS
NO ADDITIONAL CHARGE**

The Orbea Orca is no ordinary racing bike. By matching artisan fabrication with the finest materials, Orca delivers a ride quality that many aspire to but few attain. Likewise, the Orca rider is not a typical cyclist. You demand performance blended with panache and look for details so subtle as to be missed by the masses. Your Orca reflects your desire for excellence. It will be your closest companion for thousands of kilometers, so let it be a completely unique expression of your love of cycling. Make it truly yours with MyO.

SINCE 1840 **ORBEA**



Hi-viz clothing
p70



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p80



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CHANGING GEAR

All the cycling stuff you never knew you wanted reviewed, previewed, tested, ridden and occasionally broken – all in the name of finding out more about bikes etc...

PHOTOGRAPHY HENRY CARTER, JENNI LESKINEN



Tough tyres
p82



Titanium road bikes
p87

THE AWARDS Meet the coveted gongs we lavish on for excellence



Best Value
The winner of this award may not have the highest overall score in the test, and it may not be the cheapest, but it will always represent especially good performance at its price.



Best In Test
The overall winner in each group test. Scoring highly in all criteria, it will be an excellent all-rounder. Where two or more items achieve equally high scores, it will be the one that has that extra something – a touch of style, a special feature – that takes the prize.



BikesEtc Gold Award
This prestigious award goes to bikes, accessories, components or items of apparel with exceptional levels of performance, design and build quality that make them must-haves. Don't expect to see it every issue – we only hand it out when it's truly deserved!

COOL HI-VIZ GEAR

Being visible needn't mean being a Day-Glo dork, just check out these five stylish outfits



It's nice not to be run-over, but it's equally important to look cool. There was a time when to achieve the former, you had to dress like a lemon or sport a builder's hi-viz waistcoat. Luckily, those days of fluoro folly are behind us. Improved technology means reflective fabric can be applied in subtle ways and without compromising other qualities of the garment, such as stretch and breathability – significant reflectivity can now be built into clothing that appears stealthily understated until hit by a car's headlamps. Cycling is still very safe and drivers failing to spot riders due to dark clothing is cited as a contributing factor in only 2.5% of accidents. But as long as the kit looks good, we see no good reason not to light up your wardrobe.



▶ ALTURA NIGHTVISION

ALTURA PELOTON NIGHTVISION JERSEY

Despite the Altura being the colour of night, this top is peppered with a generous helping of reflective detailing, making it simultaneously stealthy and conspicuous. Tags on the arms highlight any turn signals.

 £60  altura.co.uk

ALTURA NIGHTVISION WINDPROOF GLOVES

Thin, cosy and dexterous. Shiny silicone grippers on the palms and subtle, striking neon yellow accents between the fingers make these gloves far too nice to keep solely for commuting.

 £35  altura.co.uk



ABUS IN-VIZZ HELMET

With the flick of a switch, this clever helmet deploys a polycarbonate lens to protect the wearer's eyes, à la Speed Racer. It's not its only party trick either, thanks to reflective details on the back.

 £130  zyro.co.uk

WHAT SHOWS UP IN THE DARK



ALTURA PELOTON NIGHTVISION BIBTIGHTS

A little geeky on their own, but when twinned with the matching top, the perfectly aligned detailing really looks the business, creating a cool-looking *Tron*-style effect that covers the entire rider.

 £80  altura.co.uk



WHAT NORMAL (NON-CYCLIST) PEOPLE THOUGHT

To get a civilian's opinion on how we really look, we asked some non-pedalheads to give us their verdicts



'At night you'd look more like an alien – it could use more reflectivity on the chest and back area.'

KARL 28, Cork



'I like how this looks sort of like a ninja/scuba diver costume rather than normal hi-viz.'

REBECCA 29, Kent



'Not sure that the visor is going to be much use to me, I can't see it fitting over my specs!'

RAJIV 30, North London



► CASTELLI

MET SINE THESIS HELMET

The rear of this top-end head topper includes a super-neat and very bright integrated light. Used in its scrolling mode, it gives the pleasing impression that your brain is downloading.



£190



met-helmets.com

CASTELLI MORTIROLO REFLEX JACKET

Made of Gore's fleecy Windstopper material, this jacket is extremely breathable, something boosted by two zippable vents. Being Castelli, it's flatteringly cut, but only if you're built like a racing whippet.



£160



castellicafe.co.uk



SUGOI ZAP SUBZERO GLOVES

Having used these over the worst of the winter months, we can confirm that they will indeed keep your pinkies happy down to below freezing. Covered in reflective dots, nobody will miss you should you choose to flip them off.



£45



sugoi.com

CASTELLI SORPASSO BIBTIGHTS

These bibtights are a *BikesEtc* favourite thanks to their very comfortable Progetto X2 chamois pad. They've not too much going on after dark, although details on the zips add some reflectivity.



£140



castellicafe.co.uk

WHAT SHOWS UP IN THE DARK



WHAT NORMAL PEOPLE THOUGHT

'Those gloves are so puffy they look like foam hands. Where are you commuting, dude – Siberia?'

KARL

'The jacket looks like it's half of an 80s shell suit. The light on the helmet is cool, though.'

REBECCA

'The dark bottom half means you'll look like half a person riding in this outfit at night.'

RAJIV



► GIORDANA

GIORDANA TRADE TEMPO VERO,

Fleecy, but not entirely windproof, this is one for milder days. Nothing's mild about its colouring though. Bright enough to really stand out at night, this effect is boosted by additional reflective tabs.

 £66  yellow-limited.com

GRIPGRAB HURRICANE GLOVES

Conscientiously cut and extremely well put together, these are among the best mixed-weather gloves out there. Not too loud, some subtly added reflectivity does nothing to spoil their business-like appearance.

 £30  wiggles.co.uk

LOUIS GARNEAU QUARTZ II HELMET

An internal structure buried within the helmet aims to boost its brain-protecting credentials, while a warning light fixed to the back aims to ensure that you never need put it to the test.

 £100  evanscycles.com

WHAT SHOWS UP IN THE DARK



GIORDANA TRADE TEMPO VERO BIBTIGHTS

We loved the way these Italian-made tights make it look like you're wearing shorts and legwarmers, Belgian-style. Small tags on the hips mark out your undulating behind to overtaking drivers.

 £70  yellow-limited.com



WHAT NORMAL PEOPLE THOUGHT

'The tights are pretty cool, I reckon the top is easily bright enough that'd you'd get spotted even without it being mega reflective.'

KARL

'The bottoms are good, but I'm not sure I could carry off that much DayGlo. You'd look like some kind of industrial construction worker!'

REBECCA

'This outfit is actually not bad at all. I like the reflective tags on the tights – anything that highlights your bum has got to be a good thing!'

RAJIV



► PROVIZ PIXELITE

BOLLE THE ONE HELMET

Like a *Transformers* toy for adults, individually removable panels allow you to convert this helmet for aero duties or just to keep your head warm. The large built-in rear light is a nice touch.



£109



bolle-europe.co.uk

PROVIZ PIXELITE SOFTSHELL JACKET

The PixElite fabric that makes up around half of this jacket is covered in a layer of tiny, but highly reflective dots. Grey looking in the daytime, when hit by the glare of a car's headlights it suddenly becomes unmissable.



£120



provizsports.com

PROVIZ PIXELITE WINDPROOF GLOVES

These gloves mean no driver has an excuse for missing you – they're by far the most reflective on test. Cosily fitting Lycra cuffs help keep out the chills.



£40



provizsports.com



WHAT SHOWS UP IN THE DARK

PROVIZ PIXELITE BIBTIGHTS

Using the same tech as the jacket, sizable chunks of reflectivity on the calves boost visibility. As your legs pump, their movement helps capture the attention of anyone following.



£75



provizsports.com



WHAT NORMAL PEOPLE THOUGHT

'Not sure about the grey colour for the daytime, but the gloves are a great idea for signaling.'

KARL

'This one seems the most "normal" – even if it does look a bit like the skin of a genetically modified elephant.'

REBECCA

'It's a bit expensive, but I like it! Looks much better than lots of bright hi-viz!'

RAJIV



► POC AVIP

POC AVIP SOFTSHELL JACKET

Yes, it's expensive but what price style? Well, in this case £250. Not only does it look stunning, it also packs in a dazzling amount of reflectivity. Hi-viz and high-performance? The POC has both.

 **£250**  2pure.co.uk

POLARIS RBS HOOGLIE GLOVES

RBS stands for Really Bright Stuff and these certainly live up to that billing. A substantial build will definitely keep you warm, although they're not the most dexterous we've had on test.

 **£30**
 polaris-bikewear.co.uk

POC OCTAL RACEDAY HELMET

This ridiculously lightweight helmet is also phenomenally well-ventilated, making it as unobtrusive a lid as you can buy. Small reflective details on the reverse are a nod to night-time safety.

 **£190**  2pure.co.uk

WHAT SHOWS UP IN THE DARK



POC AVIP THERMAL BIBTIGHTS

No chamois padding here, just pull them over your regular shorts when it gets nippy. With neon calf panels and a reflective bum, they also make your legs look like a pair of orange neon lollipops.

 **£140**  2pure.co.uk



WHAT NORMAL PEOPLE THOUGHT

'I'm afraid it's a bit too sporty looking for me, but then again, I mostly travel by bus.'

KARL

'I have reservations about having 'POC' written right across my bum. Otherwise...'

REBECCA

'Looks a bit like a onesie. The back is impressively bright though – can't see him getting run over.'

RAJIV

VERDICT

So, five complete outfits that will both help save your neck and look cool – even by civilian standards.

POSH PEDALS

THE ULTIMATE BUYER'S GUIDE

Pedals are all the same, right? Wrong! Choosing them can be a tricky business. Luckily, *BikesEtc* has consulted a bona fide expert so you don't put a foot wrong



Mechanically attaching your feet to a bicycle has many benefits, but how do you choose the pedals that fix you to yours? Going with the first thing the shop assistant suggests or picking the ones that are half price on Wiggle might not be the best criteria. We've rounded up clipless pedals (so-called because they do away with traditional toeclips) from the leading makers and tried them for ourselves. We've also enlisted the help of pedal expert Spencer Wilson (below) to explain what we should be looking for, along with the pros and cons of each system.



In our quest for the perfect pedal, we canvassed the views of a qualified bike fitter for the low-down on what to look for in a pedal.

SPENCER WILSON IS AN EXPERT BIKE FITTER AT PERSONALBIKEFIT.COM

'No single feature, be it weight, rotational movement, float, or whatever else makes a pedal the "best",' says Wilson. 'At Personal Bikefit, the most important factor for us to understand is how the pedal interacts with the shoe, and therefore the wearer, while riding. Does it provide a degree of guidance for your foot so that the union between shoe and pedal is secure? Or, is there a lack of guidance allowing the foot to move too freely? At the same time, you don't want your foot excessively fixed – a frequent problem that was found with early clipless pedals – as in some cases, this can result in knee injuries.'

'Rider biomechanics are also a crucial factor when it comes to picking a pedal. So, for example, weak glutes can force riders to drive forces across the top of the pedal instead of pushing downward and evenly onto the pedal platform. It's no good having a large pedal/shoe interface if the forces are not being applied to it evenly. If the loading forces aren't in line with the pedal spindle, for example, or your knees aren't able to track in a vertically straight line, then no kind of pedal – no matter how well-made it is – will be able to correct this.' ➔

What to look out for

Platform size

The bigger the pedal surface area, or platform, the better the relationship between the cleat and the pedal will be. This helps keep the pedal as comfortable during the fifth hour of a ride as it is during the first, while also providing the most efficient power transfer.

Q factor

adjustment

The Q factor is the distance between the centreline of the pedals, laterally. Not all pelvic widths are the same! To produce maximum power, the knee needs to track in a vertical line as this is both most efficient and reduces the risk of knee pain. Look for cleats with good lateral adjustment or, even better, use pedals that are available with different axle lengths.

Float

A cleat and pedal system with a zero-degree or 'fixed' float will lock your feet rigidly in place. However, most riders will prefer to have a little wiggle room. Measured in degrees, float is the amount that your heel can move side-to-side before disengaging from the pedal. Most manufacturers sell different cleats with different amounts of float, while Speedplay cleats can be carefully adjusted to tailor their degree of movement.

Release tension

A special consideration for riders new to using clipless pedals and who need easy engagement and disengagement. More experienced riders, especially those who like to

dash the pedals when sprinting, frequently prefer the security offered by a stiffer release tension. Many high-end pedals now use a carbon spar instead of the traditional steel spring to provide tension. This saves weight, but means that the effort needed to clip out cannot be adjusted. Pedals which possess a good range of spring tension can be adjusted for novice and elite riders alike.

A good range and adjustment of rotation

Riders with biomechanical imbalances and lower-limb issues may need a more precise set-up and require more rotation. Speedplay pedals are the perfect choice for this, allowing 15° of rotation right down to zero. Time pedals also allow a large degree of float. This not only protects your knees against potential damage, but means there's less chance of you accidentally unclipping.

Reliability

This is a sometimes forgotten factor in pedal choice. In order to slim down their pedals, manufacturers use smaller and smaller bearings and bushes. While these can be replaced fairly cheaply, doing so can be tricky and time consuming. For our money, you can't beat Shimano for durability.

Stack height

The height from the pedal axle to the sole of the foot. If you choose pedals with a high stack height, you may also need to raise your saddle height in order to compensate.

'Riders with lower-limb issues may need extra rotation and a more precise set-up'



LOOK KEO BLADE 2 CR 230G (PEDALS)

► WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

Featuring quick and secure entry and release with maximum power transfer thanks to the carbon blade, a new pedalling surface and low stack height.

► WHAT WE SAY

Most clipless pedals these days still resemble the original model invented in 1984 by French brand, Look. Refined over the years, the current high-end offerings replace the steel spring release mechanism with a lightweight carbon spar. This both looks cool and results in a very light and aerodynamic pedal, although it doesn't allow release tension to be adjusted – instead, the

pedals come preset to one of three options. Low stack height and large platforms mean transmission and stability feel rock solid. Look cleats are resilient little buggers at the best of times with float options spanning 0-6°.



£130



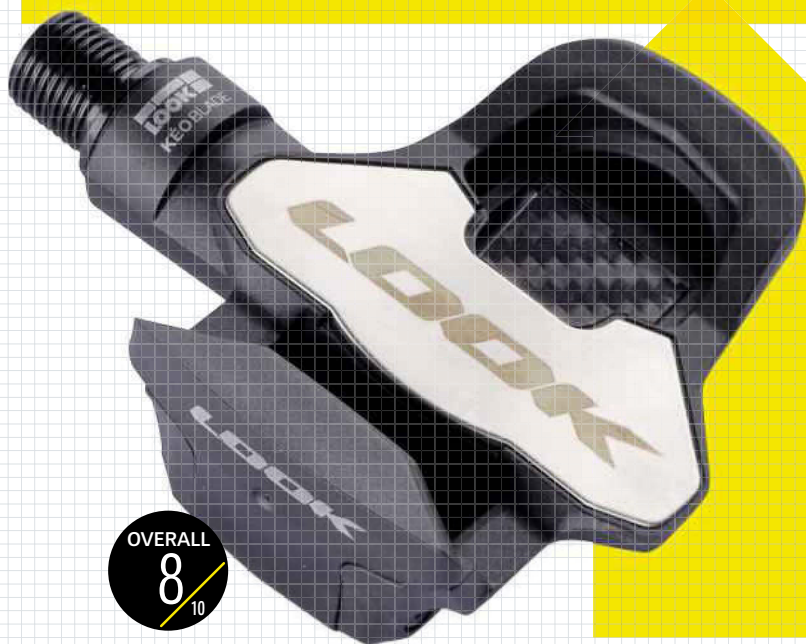
fisheroutdoor.co.uk

VERDICT

Great power transfer, bearing life and readily available spares will keep you spinning freely.



OVERALL
8/10



OVERALL
8/10

RITCHEY WCS CARBON ECHELON 219G + 67G

► WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

World-beating performance thanks to a low-weight, high-strength carbon fibre body and the combination of bushings and bearings for an extremely long life.

► WHAT WE SAY

Ritchey might not be the first name that comes to mind when you think of pedals, but the WCS Carbon Echelons could change all that. Similar to Look's design, these are compatible with Keo cleats, so there's no need to fret about availability. The carbon body has been whittled down to its bare bones, resulting in a low stack height, while still cramming in a sealed cartridge bearing between the axle and body. We love that they're extremely light and easily adjustable. Perhaps the only negative compared to Look or Shimano is the fact that this pedal's platform is a little narrower, allowing the foot to rock slightly.



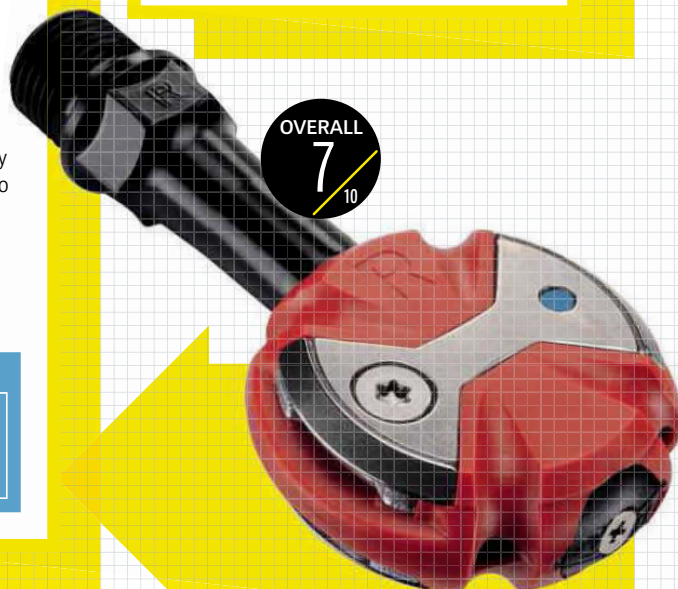
£135



paligap.cc

VERDICT

Lightweight design with adjustable tension and great durability. Not as stable as the Look or Shimano.



OVERALL
7/10

SPEEDPLAY ZERO CHROMOLY 208G + 122G

► WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

Easy dual-sided entry, micro-adjustable float, low stack height and unrivalled cornering clearance as standard.

► WHAT WE SAY

Functionally, these pedals are as unique as their looks suggest. Unlike other systems, the catch-and-release mechanism is located in the cleat, not the pedal. Their symmetrical design allows immediate entry from either side, while both the range and position of the copious float can be adjusted to precisely locate your feet, making these popular with bike-fitters. Once clipped-in, the float feels slippery smooth – some riders will love this, others may find it disconcerting. The cleats attach via a

unique four-bolt pattern but standard road shoes will work with an adaptor, although this will slightly increase the very low stack height. Moving parts on the shoes mean they easily get clogged in mud and the cleats are fairly expensive to replace. The bearings also require regular attention.



£110



i-ride.co.uk

VERDICT

Infinitely adjustable with a clever dual-sided design. Ultra-smooth float isn't for everyone.


OVERALL
9
10


SHIMANO ULTEGRA 6800 260G + 72G

► WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

Similar to Shimano's flagship Dura-Ace pedals, a carbon fibre construction offers low weight and superb stiffness as well as efficient power transfer.

► WHAT WE SAY

Regardless of not being the lightest, nor sporting the lowest stack height, these do an excellent job, being in our experience, the most durable road pedals on the market. The amount of force required to release your feet is easily controlled via an adjustable spring, while the extra height conceals better bearings that will last years between services. Three different cleats allow you to tune the range of float between

0 and 6°. Once engaged, the available movement feels less slippery than some, which will suit certain riders, but not others. The cleats provide ample lateral adjustment. Featuring broad wings tipped with rubber bumpers, they're also the most stable to walk on. 

 **£120**
 **madison.co.uk**

VERDICT

Bombproof with good adjustability and easy-to-walk-in cleats. Not the lightest.

TIME XPRESSO 8 PRO 212G + 84G

► WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

The iClic pre-open system allows you to click-in without having to force the clip open making stepping-in fast, easy and secure.

► WHAT WE SAY

Time's pedals are split between these and the budget RXS range. With a very large scooped section towards the front and an almost flat profile, front to back, locating the pedals and clipping-in is exceptionally easy. Unlike most pedals which let your heels move out in an arc while fixing the front of the shoe, these also allow for a degree of lateral movement, helping ensure against joint damage. Replaceable plates on the body ensure the float remains silky smooth for the life of the pedal. Using a carbon spar in place of a steel spring keeps weight down, but means release tension is fixed. The supplied cleats are fairly long lasting, but their hard edges make walking slippery.

 **£120**
 **extrauk.co.uk**

VERDICT

Ultra light with plenty of smooth float. High-maintenance bearings and scratchy sides count against.


OVERALL
7
10

OVERSHOES

Cold toes can ruin a good ride, so keep 'em toasty

It's easy to forget your feet when you head out on a ride. That's not to say you'll leave them at home, but plenty of people do forget to look after them properly. When it comes to winter riding, standard road shoes designed to keep your toes from sweating on balmy summer jaunts just won't cut it. That's why the overshoe was invented. These cleverly designed booties fend off wind and rain to keep you dry and warm, and if they're tight enough, will save you a few precious seconds thanks to improved aerodynamics.



OVERALL
7/10

CRAFT SIBERIAN BOOTIE

► WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

The Velcro adjuster on the base means that these will fit most pedal systems out there.

► WHAT WE SAY

Fitting snugly, the zipless design has an adjustable Velcro fastening on the sole to accommodate multiple pedal systems. Not super stretchy, so fitting can be slightly tricky.

£30

craftsportswear.co.uk



OVERALL
7/10

ENDURA FS260-PRO SLICK OS

► WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

Compact, packable and waterproof, perfect for when a great day turns wet.

► WHAT WE SAY

The stretchy, waterproof

material hugs the shoe for a race-like fit but isn't the toughest, and the Lycra back is a weak point in the waterproofing. Tucks away neatly in a jersey pocket.

£23 endurasport.com



OVERALL
8/10

ALTURA THERMASTRETCH OVERSHOE

► WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

Form-fitting with wrinkle-free comfort. Their zipless pull-on design allows for maximum insulation.

► WHAT WE SAY

Looking too small to fit, a magic amount of stretch helps these roll on painlessly. Neoprene fits perfectly and keeps your feet insulated. However, they'll only hold off the rain for a while.

£35

altura.co.uk





BikesEtc
BEST IN TEST

GORE ROAD WINDSTOPPER SOFT SHELL

▶ WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

Overall foot protection for demanding road cyclists. Keeps the cold and water splashes out.

▶ WHAT WE SAY

Windstopper fabric with a fleecy lining keeps wind and spray out and heat in. The abrasion-resistant reinforcement is neatly integrated into key areas.

 **£50**

 goreapparel.co.uk

OVERALL
9
10

SUGOI RESISTOR BOOTIE

▶ WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

An offset rear zip eliminates pressure on the Achilles tendon, to keep you warm, dry and supported.

▶ WHAT WE SAY

A unique thermal-lined Lycra material plays a big part in keeping you warm, while the zipless cuff is super comfy and smart looking.

 **£35**

 sugoi.com

OVERALL
7
10



CASTELLI DILUVIO NEOPRENE OS

▶ WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

Thermo-sealed seams for complete protection, open cleat and heel areas for stability while walking.

▶ WHAT WE SAY

With one seam running the whole length of the bootie there's less to fail and fewer areas for heat to escape. Neoprene keeps your feet warm and will banish showers, but damp will eventually soak through.


 **£35**

 castellicalfe.co.uk

OVERALL
8
10

OVERSHOES – THE WHAT, HOW AND THE WHY!

There's more to funky shoe covers than meets the eye...

 Even though there's lots of kit you can spend your hard earned-cash on, if your feet are freezing you won't be able to enjoy that new £300 seatpost. The choice of overshoes can be overwhelming but, hey, that's what we're here for, right? To guide you through the process.

WHY WEAR THEM?

Because they keep your feet dry – meaning you can stare winter in the face and shout, 'Pah to your wet and cold! You will not keep me from my saddle!'

WHAT ARE THEY MADE OF?

Polyurethane (PU): This is the lower-cost choice, but it's waterproof and, when teamed with a fleecy inner, warm.

Neoprene: Neoprene (or polychloroprene if you're on *University Challenge*) is the same material that's used in wetsuits and offers a premium alternative. It's waterproof and windproof, but as a trade-off, the material isn't very breathable.


WHAT CUT DO I GO FOR?

High: If you're a speedster who is more interested in reducing drag than warmth, then a high-cut boot is the one for you.

Medium: An overshoe that comes up to the base of the calf is perfect for winter training and should suit most winter riders.

Low: Low-cut boots are adequate when the weather isn't extreme – just make sure you don't leave any skin exposed between the boot and tight.

ANY OTHER ADVICE?

Remember to put your tights over your boots as it'll stop water running into your socks. And nobody wants soggy socks, do they? Also don't forget to give your overshoes a wash at least once every two rides. They soak up perspiration and can get whiffy in no time at all. What's the point in having dry feet if they smell, eh? Our point entirely. 

TOUGH TYRES

We discover what goes into a tyre (apart from air) – and test the five hardest on the market



Bike tyres are deceptively simple-looking things – yet they have a massive impact on the performance of your bike. We ask a lot of these unassuming rubber hoops – not only do we want them to keep us upright and rolling swiftly onwards, we also expect them to fend off puncture-causing debris. So how do they manage all this? As with so much cycling paraphernalia, the level of design and technology that goes into their production is quite mind-boggling.

The best modern tyres are blindingly fast and tenaciously grippy. Nevertheless, when you're sitting on a muddy verge fixing your umpteenth flat of the day, it's hard not to think that the future wasn't supposed to be like this.

A century and a half after the first rubber tyre, we've yet to find a solution to the most common of cycling ills, the dreaded puncture.

A brief history of tyres

'Like their automotive counterparts, bicycle tyres still rely on air to function,' explains Dave Taylor of German tyre manufacturer Schwalbe. 'Punctures continue to pose a problem, not only because of the increasing amount of debris on roads and cycleways, but also because of the different materials that make up that debris. This means bicycle tyre manufacturers have to come up with increasingly innovative methods to combat common and newer kinds of tyre killers.'

In 1839, self-taught American chemist Charles Goodyear discovered the vulcanization process more or less accidentally, opening up a whole new range of possible uses for natural rubber. Half a century later, British veterinarian John Boyd Dunlop invented the pneumatic tyre and almost overnight cycling and driving became much more comfortable. Prior to that bicycles had been generally known as 'boneshakers', and for good reason. ➔

TESTED!



THE FIVE HARDEST HOOPS ON THE MARKET

The winter tyres we tested on broken glass. It was a bad day to be an inner tube!



OVERALL
7
10

CONTINENTAL GATORSKIN 242G (25C)

▶ WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

The UK's most popular road tyre – fast, with a durable construction. A Duraskin external mesh make these the perfect high-mileage winter tyres.

▶ WHAT WE SAY

Low weight pays dividends, allowing these to spin up to speed quickly. Among the grippiest here, they still lag slightly behind Continental's race range, despite being

fairly pricy. Picking up a single puncture, a couple of big gashes eventually led to us junking one tyre, although the puncture belt did a good enough job to let us roll home first.

£38 cambriantyres.co.uk



OVERALL
7
10

PANARACER RIBMO 347G (25C)

▶ WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

Embedded technology means you can enjoy a tyre that's fast and light without compromising on toughness. The ultimate all-year, all-round tyre.

▶ WHAT WE SAY

What these chunky brutes lack in speed they make up for in hardwearing, multi-terrain ability – great for muddy spring roads or venturing off

the beaten track. The soft and surprisingly grippy rubber sustained multiple cuts in our test without relenting, although a single shard finally saw one tyre completely deflated.

£33 zyro.co.uk



BikesEtc
BEST
VALUE

OVERALL
9
10

LIFELINE PRIME ARMOUR ROAD TYRE 301G (25C)

▶ WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

Speed, traction and puncture protection for high-paced road cycling in challenging conditions. Tyres that are a fast-rolling choice in any weather.

▶ WHAT WE SAY

Not a bad riding choice by any measure, Wiggle's own-brand tyres also leave plenty of change in your pocket. Their compound is on the hard

side, which limits traction but helped them survive with a minimum of cuts. Despite picking up a single puncture, they gave every impression of being a very robust and capable option.

£14 wiggle.co.uk



OVERALL
8
10

SCHWALBE DURANO DD 291G (25C)

▶ WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

DD stands for Double Defence. In addition to the RaceGuard protection belt, an effective fabric protector on the sidewall makes this one long-wearing tyre.

▶ WHAT WE SAY

Light, grippy and recognisable as a racing tyre, the Schwalbes lost no time in establishing themselves as our favourite tyres to ride on. During

testing they sustained a vicious gash that opened the tread up down to the puncture belt, which at least proved it's doing its job. A single puncture had us reaching for our patches.

£38 schwalbe.com



BikesEtc
BEST
IN TEST

OVERALL
9
10

ARISUN RAPIDE 321G (23C)

▶ WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

A great multi-purpose tyre for most conditions. The compound structure and arrow design tread creates greater traction, handling and stability.

▶ WHAT WE SAY

Not too sprightly, but capable of generating a decent level of traction, the Arisuns provide an acceptable ride for your £40. They survived our

torture test with barely a scratch, never mind a puncture. Try as we might, we just couldn't break them, leading us to conclude that they're seriously tough customers. Recommended.

£40 neoscycling.co.uk



Not content to wait for the road to do its worst, we sent each pair of tyres over a bed of broken glass 20 times

With material technology having improved so dramatically since then, it seems strange that as cyclists, we're still beholden to leaky old air to keep us rolling. Over the years, many companies have tried to produce solid tyres, although they've yet to come close to matching the performance of pneumatic alternatives. 'Compared to solid alternatives, pneumatic tyres are much more comfortable to ride and that's one of the main reasons why we still use them today,' explains Taylor.

Modern tyre design

Air is light, has excellent dampening qualities and by adjusting the pressure, it's possible to drastically alter a tyre's feel and function.

Even today, the tubular racing tyres used by pro cyclists are surprisingly similar to the first pneumatics, comprising little more than a delicate fabric carcass overlaid with a thin layer of highly flexible rubber. Unbelievably light and fast, their one weak-spot is that they're extremely puncture prone – although this is less important to racers who have the luxury of being followed by a team car containing a mechanic ready to sling on a replacement at a moment's notice.

Because most consumers, from racers through to commuters, don't have their own team car, tyres designed for them normally include some form of defensive belt laminated between the tread of the tyre and the carcass

beneath. 'On the road, we always consider puncture protection, even for our pure competition tyres,' explains Shelly Childs, Continental's bicycle tyre brand manager.

The cheapest way to boost puncture protection is simply to add more rubber. However, this will make the tyre heavy and sluggish. Even then, some objects, like drawing pins, will still cause a puncture if they stick into the tyre at the right angle. Although it's possible to build a tyre with a breaker

Some tyres are made from aramid – which is also used in stab-proof vests

thick enough to absorb almost any foreign object, doing so would add serious weight. Due to the physics involved, mass at the edges of the wheels takes more effort to get up to speed, so heavy tyres have a major effect on acceleration and handling. And that's before considering the increased friction generated by using less flexible tyres.

A better alternative is to add an extra fabric layer between the carcass and tread – one

that's specifically designed to fend off punctures. This is how most quality tyres are made.

'If you have a belt that's too hard, the puncture protection is good, but ride comfort takes a hit. If the belt material is too soft, ride comfort is good, but puncture protection suffers,' explains Taylor.

Popular choices for adding protection to lightweight tyres include cut-resistant aramid (aromatic polyamide) or Vectran – as used in stabproof vests.

Populating our test are five tyres that reckon they've got what it takes to see off anything the road might throw their way.

However, not content to wait for the tarmac to bring the pain, along with our regular testing, we also sent each pair over a torturous bed of broken glass 20 times to really find out what they're really made of. 🚲

KEEP YOUR TYRES TIP-TOP TO HELP FEND OFF PUNCTURES

➔ **Keep the pressure topped up.** If it's too low, the risk of punctures is substantially higher. Check it at least every fortnight.

➔ **Regularly inspect your tyres for embedded foreign objects and remove them, using a pick if necessary. Always replace your tyres before they become too worn.**

➔ **The best protection belt is useless if you've got ropey inner tubes. Get some decent ones and decrease the risk of sudden failure.**

➔ **Rim tape protects the tube from damage caused by spoke ends, metal burrs and holes in the rim. When your tyre is off, be sure yours completely covers all the spoke holes.**

➔ **Puncture protection tape can cause leaks due to friction. Better to buy a tyre with extra protection engineered in.**



RIDELONDON

#makeithappen

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**MEATY
15-PAGE
REVIEW**

THE BIG BIKE TEST

THIS MONTH

Titanium road bikes

We find out what £3,000 can get you in the world of precious metal

WORDS MARC ABBOTT

Light, strong, durable, inherently forgiving: do you need more reasons to consider a titanium bike? It weighs less than steel and is tougher than aluminium, plus it carries the kudos of being made in smaller numbers, giving Ti bike owners the feeling of riding something a bit special.

All four bikes in this test are also available as a frameset-only – essentially, what you see here is, as Kinesis puts it, 'a serving suggestion', with all four specified to come in around the £3,000 mark.

The Genesis Croix de Fer Ti is an all-roader, with 35c go-anywhere tyres, while Enigma's Evoke is an endurance machine boasting clean lines and a 105 build. The Kinesis Racelight GF Ti is a 'super-versatile, all-year mile-muncher' and finally there's the J.ACK1 from new British firm J.Laverack, which takes on the big boys with boutique finishing kit. They're split by the cost of a new helmet, but which will make you feel most special?

BIKES ON TEST



GENESIS
CROIX DE
FER TI
£2,999



ENIGMA
EVOKE
£2,899



KINESIS
RACELIGHT
GF TI
£3,025



J.LAVERACK
J.ACK1
£2,950

Genesis Croix de Fer Ti £2,999

Is this a case of titanium for all terrain?



About the bike

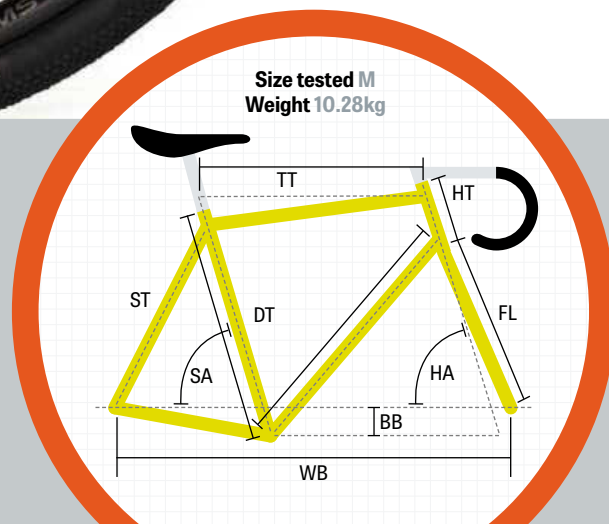
Genesis has added a titanium version of its ever-popular Croix de Fer steel adventure bike to the range this year, claiming to offer a lighter option, yet still retaining the 'cross-terrain capacity for which the CdF is famous'. It's only natural that a bike built to take you along backroads and dirt tracks alike should feel robust, but this is for nothing if it doesn't have the agility to take you where you need to go with a certain aplomb at speed. We'll see whether titanium works in this package, and if the Croix de Fer Ti is the perfect all-terrain bike.

Ride photography: Michelle Abbott



GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured			
Top tube (TT)	560mm	561mm	Head tube (HT)	165mm	165mm
Seat tube (ST)	530mm	533mm	Head angle (HA)	71.5°	71.8°
Down tube (DT)	N/A	648mm	Seat angle (SA)	73.5°	73.1°
Fork length (FL)	N/A	400mm	Wheelbase (WB)	1,035mm	1,032mm
			BB drop (BB)	N/A	78mm





SPEC

FRAME

3AL 2.5V double-buttressed titanium, carbon fork with 1.5-1.125in tapered steerer

GROUPSET

Shimano 105

BRAKES

Shimano RS785 hydraulic discs

CHAINSET

Shimano 105, 50/34

CASSETTE

Shimano 105, 11-32

BARS

Genesis RandoX Flared, alloy

STEM

Genesis Road, alloy

SADDLE

Genesis Road Comfort

SEATPOST

Genesis, alloy, 27.2mm

WHEELS

Alex Rims Draw 1.9S

TYRES

Clement X'Plor USH, 35c

CONTACT

genesisbikes.co.uk

The ride

First impression: The rugged Croix de Fer does have some get-up-and-go, and instantly feels comfortable and at ease in any situation, more so on fire roads. However, it's giving away almost 2.3kg to an equivalent-sized Kinesis Racelight GF_01.

On the road: That said, this new Croix de Fer is almost 1kg lighter than the lightest steel-framed CdF, so we're not going to give it too much of a working over for being the heavyweight of this

bunch. Where this bike's strength really lies is in its all-day comfort, on most surfaces. A fairly relaxed head angle, low bottom bracket and long wheelbase make it an excellent choice for a lengthy ride. Taking a bridleway excursion halfway round our usual test loop provided a glimpse of the CdF's all-terrain capability, and allowed the 35c tyres to shine. Once back on the road, those tyres were a little skittish on damp roads. Stopping on looser

surfaces is where the hydraulic brakes' ease of modulation really comes into its own, with one finger all that's needed to scrub speed off. Give the levers a handful and you have enough control to stop on loose chippings or even gravel tracks.

The CdF does feel a little ponderous on tarmac when carving a descent, however, but this is likely to be a result of the tread pattern of the tyres and the amount by which they deform – especially the



Titanium road bikes

Thanks to 105 components throughout, the build is a very high standard and even the budget-conscious chain is a clever choice

front under braking – more than the bike's geometry. We don't get on with the Genesis Road Comfort saddle. Like the deeply wrapped handlebars, its luxurious padding takes a little feel away from the rear end. When the titanium frame and a 27.2mm seatpost is doing a lot of that work anyway, it's largely superfluous. That said, like the tyres (see below), it would be easy to swap if you're looking for more feedback.

Handling: Let's make no bones about it, this bike is a real hoot on bridleways. The easy-going riding position, deeply padded bars and wide tyres make this titanium charger something you can truly ride on 80% of surfaces, and in more comfort than the steel version. Once you learn to trust in the side grip of the tyres and loosen up, the frame does its best to eliminate buzz; progress can be rapid, too, especially on level dirt tracks. On the road, you need to be careful with your tyre pressure; we ran 85psi on tarmac. As long as you don't expect exceptional acceleration from the tyres, you'll be fine. Plus, you can swap them out for something more road-oriented like a pair of Schwalbe Ones – currently £23.50 each at wigggle.co.uk.

The spec


Frameset: The CdF's frame is made from the same grade material as used in aircraft hydraulic systems – seamless and heat-treated 3AL, 2.5V titanium. However, subtle differences in tube shaping make this bike stand out. An oval-profile top tube meets the tapered head tube while a 44mm-diameter down tube morphs from boxy to oval as it extends to the bottom bracket. Beefed-up seatstays and chainstays flare toward the rear axle, leaving clearance for its whopping great 35c cross tyres. There are mounts for racks and mudguards, too. All cabling is externally routed, which might make adjustment and maintenance easier, but the bike's gear cables featuring brass adjusters (see below) which run from the head tube to bottom bracket without any outers, were already showing signs of frayed coatings. A lengthy wheelbase of 1,032mm means extra stability, while a head angle of 71.8° backs this up. Fancy your own build? There's a frameset-only option for £1,800.

Groupset: Almost everything is 105 spec apart from the chain, which is a budget-friendly KMC X11. A 50/34 chainset works with an identical ratio cassette to the Enigma and



J.Laverack bikes. Like the Enigma, there are RS505 shifters, which offer 10mm of adjustability for reach, and are compatible with all 11-speed Shimano systems.

Finishing kit: There's unspectacular in-house Genesis alloy kit for the bars, stem and seatpost. We like the RandoX bars, though – shape-wise, they offer swept-back tops and a comfortable reach to flared drops, which is good for control on dirt tracks. They're wrapped with cork tape so thick that we had to go gloveless. This padding has its benefit off-road, but if you're riding on tarmac, we found it robs the feel.

Wheels: Tubeless-compatible Alex 1.9S wheels have a 19mm diameter, so can accommodate tyres like the Clement's 35c X'Plor USH and are well-suited to cycling on and off-road. Once in the rough stuff, they work well, but struggle in the wet due to the lack of proper CX tread on their shoulders. Overall, a good on/off-road compromise. 



RATING

FRAME

Big wheelbase and relaxed geometry means comfort

COMPONENTS

Pretty much all 105, apart from the budget chain

WHEELS

Wide diameter, well-suited to on and off-road use

THE RIDE

Pumps out the thrills on bridleways and beyond

OVERALL

8.2
10



Gear cables have pretty brass adjusters (above), but are partially exposed to the elements. Rack and mudguard mounts (right) add versatility



Ripped, rugged and up for almost anything, this titanium CdF is an all-terrain titan

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Enigma Evoke £2,899

Endurance beauty built for the long-haul



About the bike

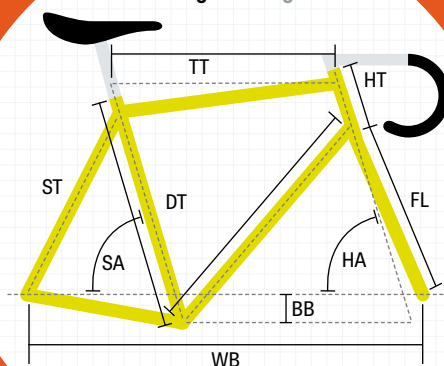
Enigma's Evoke is pitched squarely at those of us who crave a bike capable of handling a long day in the saddle that's also no stranger to turning a few heads. So, if you're on the cusp of buying a carbon-framed road bike, hold your horses for a moment. We took it for a spin around our regular test loop to see how it stacked up out on the road. However, despite the Evoke's killer looks, our main concern is whether its smooth ride be a little too tame for our liking – or will this titanium stunner get the balance of stiffness and comfort just right?



GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured			
Top tube (TT)	530mm	530mm	Head tube (HT)	125mm	125mm
Seat tube (ST)	480mm	482mm	Head angle (HA)	72°	72.3°
Down tube (DT)	N/A	620mm	Seat angle (SA)	74°	73.5°
Fork length (FL)	N/A	372mm	Wheelbase (WB)	N/A	972mm
			BB drop (BB)	N/A	82mm

Size tested 53
Weight 9.04kg





SPEC

FRAME

Grade 9 3AL 2.5V double-buttet titanium with carbon fork

GROUPSET

Shimano 105

BRAKES

Shimano RS685 hydraulic discs

CHAINSET

Shimano 105, 50/34

CASSETTE

Shimano, 11-32

BARS

Enigma, 6061 alloy

STEM

Enigma, alloy

SADDLE

Enigma Ellipse

SEATPOST

Enigma, carbon, 31.6mm

WHEELS

Mavic Aksium One

TYRES

Continental Gatorskin, 25c

CONTACT

enigmabikes.com

The ride

First impression: With a wonderful combination of comfort where it's needed and stiffness in all the right places, the Evoke is eager to get its power down early on in our first ride – take your eyes off the top tube and you could swear you were on a high-end carbon bike devoid of all the harshness.

On the road: The first thing that brings you back down to earth, however, is a hill. The Evoke tipped our scales at just over 9kg, which didn't bode well

for climbing. Yes, it's a little hefty, but the bike has a stealthy kind of stiffness. This feeling of more immediate power transfer is exhilarating – little is going to waste. The wide spread of gears from the 11-32 cassette is a real advantage. This connected sensation continues on flatter and rolling roads, with the Evoke showing a willingness to engage that takes some dialling into. For an endurance bike, there's more than enough excitement on tap.

Braking performance from Shimano's hydraulic set-up really is top-drawer, and we were able to put this to the test in some pretty grotty weather. The security with which you can grab a handful of lever and the consistency of response is just what we needed on damp, wintry roads.

Handling: Happily, there's no stodginess to speak of. With the carbon fork taking any last sting out of the road, an assured feeling of planted cornering ➔



Titanium road bikes

Internally routed cables on the black carbon front fork just add to the bike's already sky-high wow factor

is there in abundance. Exactly what you need from an endurance bike – nothing too twitchy or too harsh. A deep bottom bracket drop adds even more confidence by lowering your centre of gravity. There's also plenty of feel transmitted upwards. Mavic's wheels respond more than adequately to sprint efforts, and while robust, they're far from ideal climbing partners. The puncture-resistant Gatorskins aren't light, but offer perfect all-weather grip.

The spec

Frameset: The Evoke's round-profile, double-buttressed tubing lends it an air of old-world charm. Using this butting method, Enigma has also strengthened the tubes at the key joints without a weight penalty. A 44mm-diameter down tube meets a relatively squat 125mm head tube of exactly the same diameter; Enigma claims this increases lateral rigidity. The counterpoint to this traditional round-tubed front triangle is the rear stays. The slender seatstays project straight to the rear hub, with more than adequate clearance for the 25c tyres fitted to our bike. There's room for 28c here, if not 32. But the chainstays flare markedly from the bottom bracket to a welded joint with their machined rear dropouts that's pure art. Besides looking amazing, the intention here is to ensure the braking forces are borne not by the stays, but by the dropouts.


Although this is an endurance bike, our size 53 model sports a relatively short 972mm wheelbase, but the fairly relaxed head angle of 72.3° tempers this. Three 10mm spacers on the steerer give ample adjustment to tailor the front end for either aggression or upright mile-munching. The Enigma's cabling is externally routed below the down tube, with the exception of the front brake cable, which enters the carbon fork very neatly. The front and rear mech cables will take the brunt of muck thrown up from the road, however. There are no front or rear rack or mudguard mounts here, just simple lines and extreme beauty. The frameset is available to buy separately for £1,799.

Groupset: Tried and tested Shimano 105 components are used to create a sensitive build that comes in at a sensible price (a Dura-Ace version costs £4,350). The Evoke uses this 11-speed groupset for front and rear mechs and also the 50/34 compact chainset. Its 11-32 cassette offers the



widest range of ratios available in 105. Shimano's hydraulic brake system employs non-series 11-speed shifters with a hidden fluid reservoir. These shifters are compatible with all of Shimano's 11-speed groupsets.

Finishing kit: Enigma's own 42cm alloy bars do the job very well with a decent amount of flex, an ergonomically pleasing compact drop and a sensible diameter for our size 53 frame. The 31.6mm seatpost is the only carbon item, but it does a good job isolating vibrations from the road. The Enigma-branded Ellipse saddle is a little long in the nose, but grippy and flexible enough to keep long rides stress-free.

Wheels: The Evoke rolls on Mavic's Aksium One wheelset, which uses 24 straight-pull spokes front and rear for stiffness. Although our test bike is equipped with superbly reliable 25mm Gatorskin tyres, the Mavic rims are wide enough to accommodate rubber up to 32c. 

RATING

FRAME

Double-buttressed and a thing of rare beauty

COMPONENTS

Pretty much 11-speed 105 everywhere

WHEELS

Reliable and versatile if you crave wider rubber

THE RIDE

Hugely engaging – not an ounce of harshness

OVERALL

8.5
10



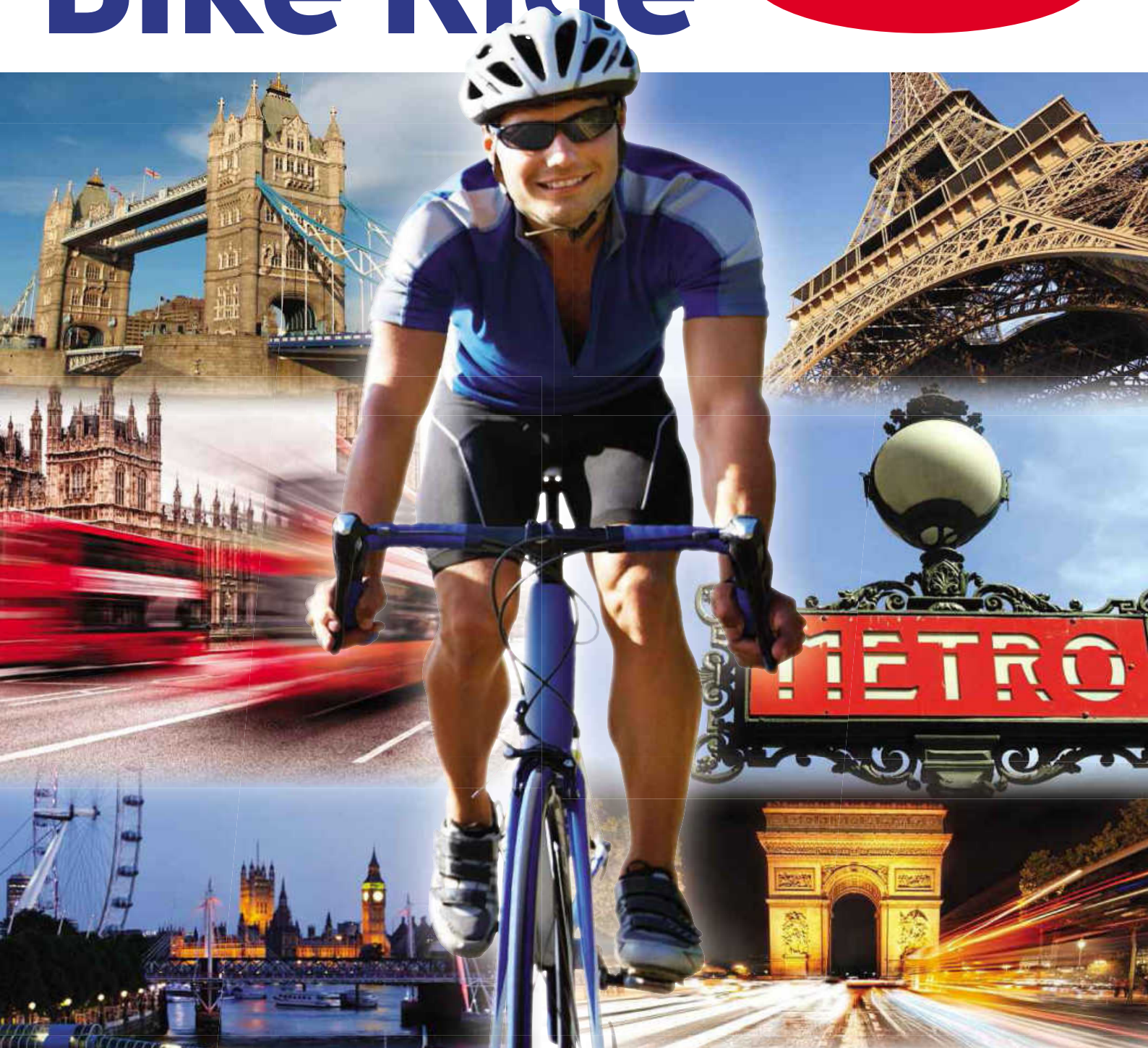
The premium-looking finish on the Evoke is enough to take your breath away (above), while Shimano's latest 11-speed 105 groupset (right) is a brilliant choice



Real comfort and stiffness plus a willingness to engage that's quite breathtaking

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Kinesis Racelight GF_Ti £3,025

Lowweight, fat tyres, big performance



About the bike

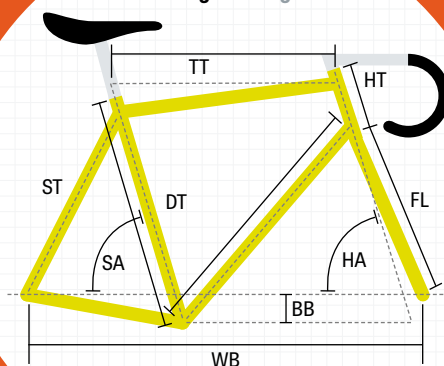
Now in its third iteration, if any proof was needed to underline this bike's enduring popularity, the Kinesis GF_Ti is said to provide the holy grail not just of titanium bikes, but road bikes the world over – giving speed, comfort and agility in a lightweight package. Aimed at the sportive rider, or even weekend tourer, its versatility and do-it-all nature is borne out by mudguard and rack mounts, as well as 28c tyres. But will the latest GF_Ti be the best one yet or is this a case of a bridge too far? Best we jump in the saddle to see what it has to offer...



GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured			
Top tube (TT)	562mm	560mm	Head tube (HT)	163mm	161mm
Seat tube (ST)	520mm	523mm	Head angle (HA)	73°	72.8°
Down tube (DT)	N/A	638mm	Seat angle (SA)	73.5°	73.5°
Fork length (FL)	N/A	385mm	Wheelbase (WB)	N/A	1,012mm
			BB drop (BB)	70mm	72mm

Size tested 55.5
Weight 7.94kg





SPEC

FRAME
Aerograde 3AL 2.5V titanium frame, Tracer 1.5 carbon fork

GROUPSET
Shimano Dura-Ace

BRAKES
TRP RG-957

CHAINSET
Shimano Dura-Ace, 53/39

CASSETTE
Shimano Dura-Ace, 11-28

BARS
FSA SL-K, carbon

STEM
FSA SL-K, carbon

SADDLE
Fizik Ariona

SEATPOST
Kinesis, carbon, 31.6mm

WHEELS
Kinesis Racelight alloy clinchers

TYRES
Schwalbe One, 28c

CONTACT
kinesisbikes.co.uk

The ride

First impression: In the first five miles of our test loop, this bike does enough to convince us that it's the most comfortable bike on test. Beyond the way in which the wide-diameter, high-volume tyres damp out the imperfections, the frame is perfectly designed for a long ride on a bad road. Imagine what it'd be like on fresh, summer road surfaces.

On the road: Very rarely does a bike build gel so well as this one. First, the level of comfort from the

rear end is almost other-worldly, with any harshness taken out of the ride by the design of the seatstays and lowering the pressure of the 28c tyres. The front end is almost equally flawless, with precise, assured handling and a quality set of bars. The low overall weight of the build shows itself on rolling roads, with the GF_Ti destroying short rises out of the saddle. Although our bike features a 53/39 set-up, the 11-28 cassette offers sufficient

options to haul you up some big hills, with the added bonus of bigger ratios for hammering down the other side, or on flat stretches of country lanes. This bike is deceptively quick, not least due to its lightweight frame and tyres. The wheels? For in-house hoops, they're impressive, and not only spin up with some eagerness, but also have real long-term durability. Just imagine what you could get up to with some truly featherlight wheels. ➔



Titanium road bikes

Iconic Dura-Ace shifters set this well-specced bike off a treat. You'll want to ride it into the sunset and beyond

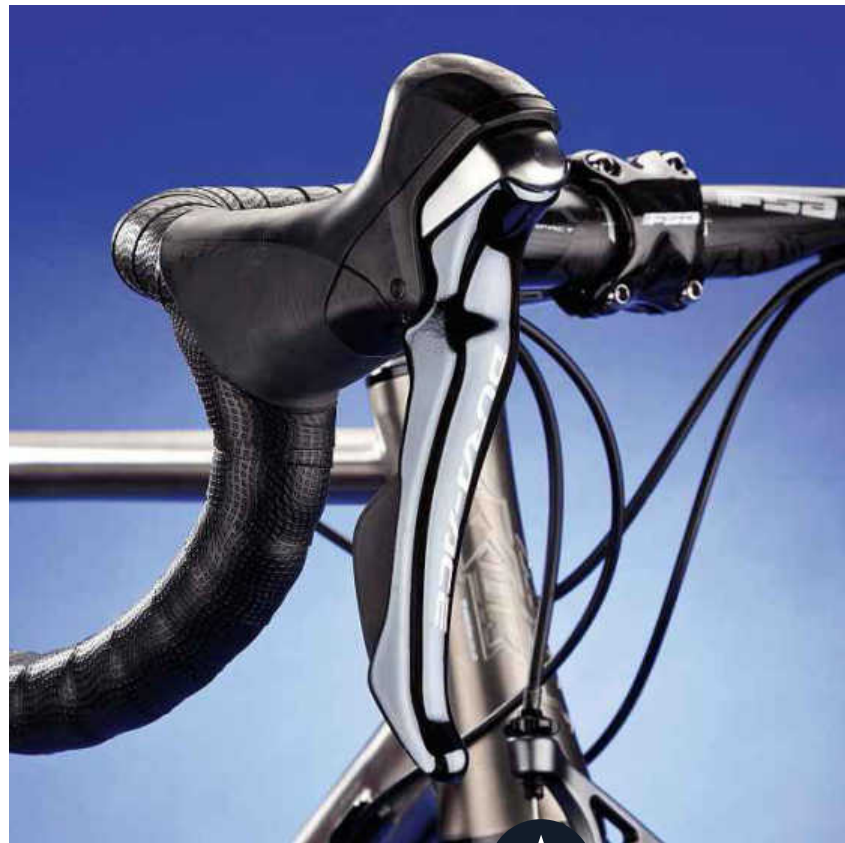
Handling: The fairly long wheelbase and relaxed steering geometry of the GF_Ti mean nothing's ever going to get out of hand. Even on some of the more rapid descents of our loop, the front end remained composed under quick direction changes, bumps in the road, and when adjusting our line mid-corner. Which isn't to say that it's not a fairly agile machine. Don't expect race bike levels of front-end feel, or razor-sharpness of steering, but do expect a bike that still has the capacity to excite along the route of your next 100-mile ride. Its tapered steerer lends some much-needed stiffness to the proceedings, as well as confidence in the bike's stability. We can't avoid the tyres, either. They're a perfect fit for the bike, offering stacks of comfort and confidence. Even in the slimiest of conditions, the slick surface of the Schwalbe One remained planted. They're fast tyres with excellent puncture resistance and we can't recommend them highly enough.

The spec

Frameset: We're going to approach this new version of the GF_Ti frame in the opposite way to the Enigma, with reference to the details. The quality of the welds outshines those on the Enigma; the tapered head tube looks like a metal hourglass; even the subtly chamfered holes beneath the down tube which serve as exits for the front and rear mech cables are a delight. Bowed seatstays, designed as such to act as shock absorbers, arc towards the rear dropouts, at which point more sharply profiled chainstays trace their way to the bottom bracket. The shape of the top tube, flattening as it reaches the head tube, is a treat for the eyes, while porting for Di2 cabling is in evidence, too.

This newest version of the GF_Ti frame also has revised geometry, with the head angle being dropped by half a degree, which the firm says was to 'make it a slightly more forgiving ride in any situation'. At a measured 72.8° this certainly gives the GF_Ti the kind of precise turn-in you'd demand of a high-class sportive bike. A lengthy wheelbase of 1,012mm aids stability too. Although our bike cost £3,025, the frameset will set you back a very reasonable £1,450.

Groupset: The GF_Ti gets even more impressive when you consider that for the price of this build, the bike was specified with a Shimano Dura-Ace groupset – shifters,



53/39 chainset, front and rear mechs, even the 11-28 cassette are all from the Japanese giant's top-line range. The only parts that aren't Dura-Ace are the front and rear brakes, and there's a good reason. As the bike is fitted with 28c tyres and has clearance for mudguards, Kinesis has fitted TRP RG-957 long-drop callipers.

Finishing kit: The GF_Ti has FSA's carbon SL-K handlebars and stem. The 42cm-wide bars were spot-on for our tastes. Elsewhere, an own-brand Kinesis carbon seatpost is topped with Fizik's comfy, fuss-free Arione saddle.

Wheels: The GF_Ti is fitted with Kinesis's own tubeless-ready Racelight alloy clinchers. Designed for all-season use, their 18mm internal rim is wide enough for 23-32mm tyres. Their sealed bearings and 28-spoke design suggest high durability. The way the Schwalbe One 28c tyres roll over the road with as little as 85psi in them is hugely impressive. 🚲



RATING

FRAME

Lengthy wheelbase and relaxed steering geometry

COMPONENTS

Top-end Shimano Dura-Ace gives a premium feel

WHEELS

Durable, versatile and fast rolling, but not the lightest

THE RIDE

It's the most comfortable on test by a country mile

OVERALL

9.1 / 10



Weld quality was the best on test, while bowed seatstays (above) act as built-in shock absorbers. The stunning tapered head tube (right) looks like a metal hourglass



Beautiful to look at and amazing to ride – add a lightweight set of wheels for even greater thrills

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J.Laverack

J.ACK 1 £2,950

Young upstart takes the boutique approach



About the bike

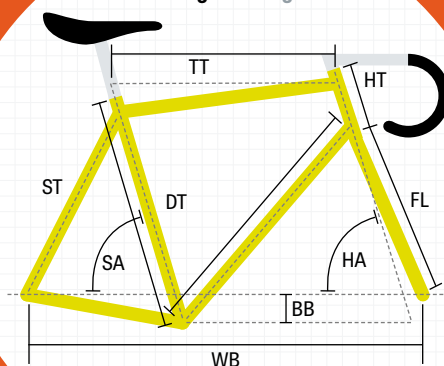
Young British company J.Laverack, based in Rutland, England has set out to create a four-season titanium bike that's built to go anywhere and do anything. But it has decided to do things a little differently. Opting to equip its entry-level build with components from mega-classy UK companies such as Brooks and Hunt already makes the J.ACK 1 a real eye-catcher. And if you're a big fan of well-made kit, you should be in for a real treat. All of J.Laverack's bikes are built to order, but will this one add up to more than the sum of its parts?



GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured			
Top tube (TT)	539mm	539mm	Head tube (HT)	130mm	129mm
Seat tube (ST)	520mm	520mm	Head angle (HA)	71°	73°
Down tube (DT)	N/A	630mm	Seat angle (SA)	73°	71.8°
Fork length (FL)	N/A	400mm	Wheelbase (WB)	993mm	991mm
			BB drop (BB)	N/A	67mm

Size tested 52
Weight 9.28kg





SPEC

FRAME
3AL 2.5V titanium frame,
Whisky No7 carbon fork

GROUPSET
Shimano 105

BRAKES
Shimano CX77
cable discs

CHAINSET
Shimano 105, 50/34

CASSETTE
Shimano, 11-32

BARS
PRO LT, alloy

STEM
PRO LT, alloy

SADDLE
Brooks Cambium C15

SEATPOST
PRO LT, alloy, 31.6mm

WHEELS
Hunt 4 Season

TYRES
Hutchinson Sector, 28c

CONTACT
jlaverrack.co.uk

The ride

First impression: Don't be fooled by the bike's all-up weight of 9.28kg; the J.ACK proves from the off what a hitter it can be, leaping out of the turns with a willingness for speed and a hunger for higher gears. Comfort levels are high and we ended our first hour on the bike without a single ache or hint of fatigue. We also spent a good half an hour poring over the detail in the frame – there's no doubt this is the real looker of the bunch. If you buy

one, you'd be well advised to buy a spare frameset just to mount on your living room wall.

On the road: For a bike that's designed to tackle the worst of the UK's roads, and even rip up bridleways, the J.ACK's frame surpassed our expectations, providing a ride that's far more direct than some titanium builds can be. But don't think that it lacks any comfort; there's plenty of compliance from the rear end, it's just that this is combined with a thirst

for a good hammering. A Hope PF46 pressfit bottom bracket supplies an efficient transfer of power, while the tapered head tube, attack-mode head angle and aggressive stem set-up lends a directness to front-end feel, spurring us on to our first local climb. No, this bike can't touch the Kinesis for climbing ability, but it does give away more than a kilo to it. Specify the J.ACK with Dura-Ace and you'd have a bike that rivals the very best titanium ➤



Titanium road bikes

Cyclocross spec Shimano CX77 brakes use a dual-pad system and have plenty of stopping power to spare

bikes around. That said, it will eagerly punch its way up a short climb, and has more than enough gears to grind out a longer ascent. Stopping power was there when we needed it, and brushing a few km/h off into corners was easily done, even when cranked over. Special mention goes to the Brooks C15 saddle; it looks like it's going to destroy your backside, but it's far more comfortable than we expected.

Handling: The 130mm tapered head tube and low set-up are the start of a love affair with cornering, and matters are only improved when you're rolling on 28c tyres. The Hutchinson Sectors almost give the impression of riding an off-road fat bike, such is the way in which they smooth out the road below you – we spent most of our time running them at around 85psi. Their wide contact patch boosts confidence, especially on grimy back roads, although we did experience some slip from the rear tyre when climbing out of the saddle. This we put down to the tyres being freshly fitted. Hunt's 4 Season wheels only enhance the comfort of the ride; they're a worthy addition to any bike.

The spec

Frameset: The J.ACK's frame, like every other bike here, is made from aerospace-standard 3AL 2.5V titanium – which contains 3% aluminium and 2.5% vanadium, but the top tube flattens in the middle for more comfortable shouldering. Cabling is internally routed, with the exception of the front brake cable, which is fixed to the outside of a handsome Whisky fork. Cabling access points are beautifully engineered, but our bike was set up with some cable slack at the front end which slightly ruined the forward view. The first 50 frames feature a bead-blasted frame number on the wide down tube (see below), and there's a date of manufacture neatly blasted on to the back of the seat tube. Classy stuff. The seatstays and chainstays arch towards the rear axle, providing ample clearance for the 28c tyres with mudguards (with room for 32c without), and mounts for mudguards and rack are also provided. Those curvy stays also iron out imperfections in the road. Di2 porting is also built into the frame. Steering geometry is much more aggressive than the spec sheet suggests, with our measurements providing a borderline-racy 73° head angle. A super-stable 991mm wheelbase helps to temper

any nervy steering, though. The J.ACK frameset is also available separately, with prices starting from £1,500.

Groupset: The J.ACK has a full complement of Shimano 105 equipment, including shifters, 50/34 chainset, front and rear derailleurs and 11-32 cassette. Unlike the Evoke, there are cable-actuated Shimano disc brakes. This cyclocross-bred CX77 system uses a dual-pad system. Each brake is independently adjustable making fine-tuning easier.

Finishing kit: Ultra-dependable PRO LT alloy is used for the 42cm compact handlebars, stem and seatpost. There's also premium suede-effect Fizik bar tape, and topping off the 31.6mm seatpost is a sumptuous Brooks C15 saddle.

Wheels: The J.ACK uses Hunt's tubeless-compatible 4 Season wheelset, with tubeless 28c Hutchinson Sector tyres. They will accommodate 23–45c CX rubber, thanks to a 17mm rim bed. They're peppy enough for climbing too. 🚴



RATING

FRAME

Great for long rides – a flat top tube helps portability

COMPONENTS

11-speed Shimano 105 works especially well

WHEELS

Light and adaptable and great for hill climbing

THE RIDE

Lots of fun – super smooth and ultra sprightly

OVERALL

8.9/10



Numbers on the down tube (above) mark the first 50 bikes off the production line, while the headset badge (right) has a classy vibe



Ace wheels, a killer frame and a great saddle make the J.ACK1 a total pleasure to ride

RESOLUTION NOT REVOLUTION

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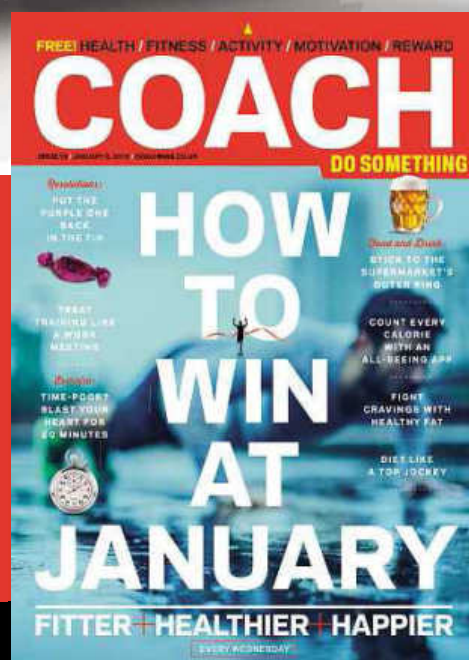


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AND THE WINNER IS... Kinesis Race light GF_Ti

High performance and astonishing value for the spec

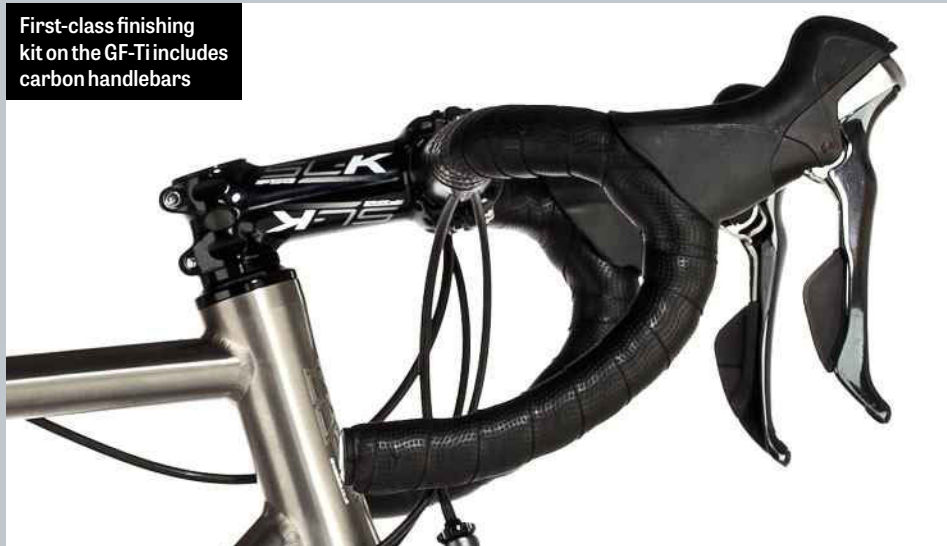
All four of our bikes this month are available to spec as you wish, but we've rated them as supplied, and there's one that nudges ahead of the pack by virtue of its low weight and exceptional value. Kinesis has honed the design of its GF_Ti frame to a point where you'll struggle to find fault. But the masterstroke here is that it's not only a bike to pass onto your children, it's finished with a selection of very well thought-out components and a Dura-Ace groupset. There's not a thing you'd need to upgrade on this build to bring many years of pleasure.

But it's a close-run result, as J.Laverack's JACK1 is hot on its heels. For a firm that's not even a year old, this is an impressive feat. The JACK's full 105 groupset, willing frame, plus stunning wheels and saddle mark it out as something really special. If we'd rated these bikes on looks alone, it would be the clear victor; it's just beaten here by a lighter bike with a better groupset. If climbing hills isn't your thing, and you want to be the talking point of the Sunday club run, buy this bike now.

Enigma's Evoke is the stiffest set-up of the bunch, and while this is of great benefit to its performance, it's almost a little too direct to fully fulfill its endurance brief. Don't get the wrong idea – the Evoke is all-day comfortable, it's just that it only truly comes fully to life when ridden really hard.

The Genesis Croix de Fer Ti is a bike built to be all things to all riders, and as such feels slightly compromised. If you have a taste for adventure, this build is all-terrain-ready straight out of the box and would be well suited to your needs. If most of your riding is going to be on the road, then changes will need to be made. One solution would be to buy the frameset and spec it to your requirements. All of these bikes, though, have a lot to recommend them. 🚴

First-class finishing kit on the GF-Ti includes carbon handlebars

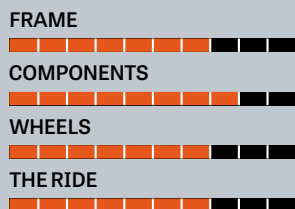


We love 105 and Ultegra but there's something a bit special about Dura-Ace

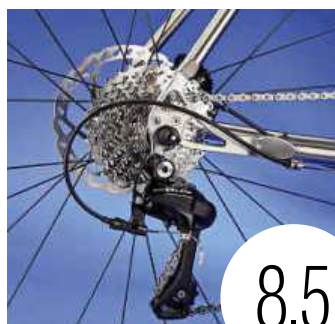
How they stack up...



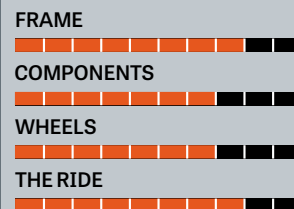
GENESIS CROIX DE FER
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8.2



ENIGMA EVOKE
£2,899



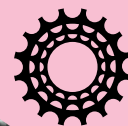
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Ride photography: Michelle Abbott



BikesEtc

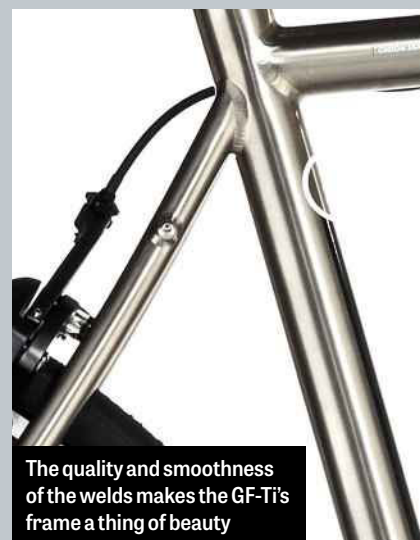
**BEST
IN TEST**



A slender carbon seatpost only serves to enhance the comfort of a titanium bike



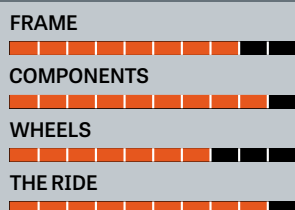
Kinesis own-brand wheels are pretty good, but shod with Schwalbe One tyres, they become outstanding



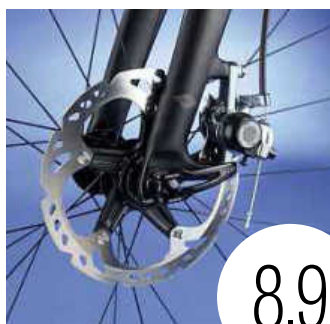
The quality and smoothness of the welds makes the GF-Ti's frame a thing of beauty



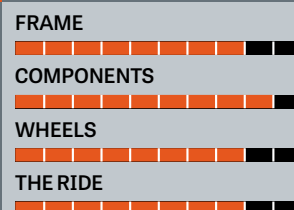
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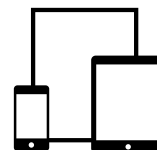
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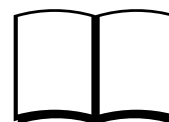


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the edge

SKILLS, TIPS AND FIXES TO
UPGRADE YOUR PERFORMANCE



NUTRITION

Cold-defying foods

Murder mucus this winter with this quintet of cold-quashing chow!

1 GARLIC

'A clove of garlic a day keeps the doctor away...' OK, raw garlic isn't as palatable as a Granny Smith but in a study out of East Sussex, half of the 146 volunteers consumed a daily garlic supplement; the other half had nothing. Over 90 days, just 24 colds were recorded among the garlic group compared to 65 for the abstainers. The cold-defying element is the chemical allicin.

2 TURMERIC

Turmeric has been used for over 4,000 years in India as a spice and dye. And research shows that this bright orange root also wards off the sniffles, thanks to the active compound curcumin, which fights infections and remedies digestive problems. It also activates a gene in the brain that causes the production of bilirubin – a powerful antioxidant.


3 SWEET POTATO

'Your sweetness is my weakness,' warbled ex-*Grange Hill*er turned popstar Michelle Gayle. But like Roland's diet, she was wrong. Sweet potato is packed with benefits including improving muscle and tissue health. It's also stuffed with Beta-carotene, which your body converts into vitamin A – vital for keeping the mucous membranes that line our noses and throats healthy.

4 DARK GREEN LEAFY VEG

If it's good enough for Popeye, it's good enough for you... Dark green leafy veg is like green veg but on steroids. Bursting from the ground into your larder, this wonder food is saturated with vitamins, minerals and substances that protect you from heart disease, diabetes and cancer: Kale is the DGLV poster-boy, loaded with vitamins A, C and K to fend off colds.

5 WILD SALMON

Vitamin D is essential for the absorption of calcium and phosphorous, which has implications for bone health. However, low vitamin-D levels equals higher chances of a cold. Sunlight's the best source but this is Britain, dagnabbit, and it's winter! Luckily, wild salmon's awash with in the stuff. It's also packed with omega-3 for reducing exercise-induced inflammation in limbs. 



RIDE LIKE THE PROS

Fabian Cancellara

The Swiss star is famed for his speed – we explore his tricks and techniques to find out how he does it

Just before Christmas, Fabian Cancellara confirmed one of the worst-kept secrets in sport – that he was to retire at the end of the 2016 season. By then, Spartacus will be 35 and will have ticked off 16 years at the top end of the world's toughest sport.

Cancellara made his name in the meticulous world of time-trial, winning two junior world TT titles before claiming four senior crowns, as well as nine national TT titles. But it wasn't all about one man and his aerobars, as Cancellara applied his muscular endurance to the toughest one-day Classics including Paris-Roubaix and Flanders, which he's won three times apiece. He shines in multi-stage races and holds the record for wearing the yellow jersey for the most days without winning the Tour de France. Yes, there are many things we can learn from the way Fab prepares to win...

FACT FILE

Name Fabian Cancellara

Age 34

Lives Near Bern, Switzerland

Rider type Time-triallist; Classics specialist

Professional teams 2001-2002 Mapei-QuickStep; 2003-2005 Fassa Bortolo; 2006-2010 Team CSC; 2011-present Leopard Trek (which has evolved into Trek-Segafredo)

Palmarès World Time Trial Champs 2006-2007, 2009-2010; Olympic Time Trial Champs 2008; Paris-Roubaix 2006, 2010, 2013; Tour of Flanders 2010, 2013, 2014; Milan-San Remo 2008

Don't let data take over

WHAT? All the Trek-Segafredo riders use an SRM power meter. Power meters and heart-rate monitors are great tools to train smart. For instance, if you're looking to improve your fat-burning capabilities, a tried-and-trusted method is to cycle at around 70% of your maximum heart rate. If you're looking to raise your anaerobic threshold, which will ensure you can race harder and faster for longer, you need to train above 85-90% of your maximum heart rate for short periods. But don't be a slave to data.

HOW? 'I always have a rough plan of when I'm going to attack, and may have a wattage figure in mind, but it doesn't always play out like that,' explains Cancellara. 'Some of my most fruitful attacks have purely been based on intuition.' You see, not only can training tools begin to drain the fun from your riding, but often, you can dig deeper when racing and training purely on feel.

Periodise your training schedule

WHAT? 'In the past, your training plan used to consist of two months of base training. Then Team Sky brought in the idea of reverse periodisation.'

HOW? Periodisation means breaking your training year down into chunks to stimulate specific improvements. Traditionally this is done by breaking it into separate phases – base, build, and competition – which build the intensity of training as the season progresses with a rest phase coming after it ends in the winter. Reverse periodisation is where intensity starts high in winter with efforts increased as the season approaches. This approach is designed for pros, but you'd still benefit from traditional periodisation. For more on this, be sure to grab next month's issue of *BikesEtc* which comes with a free training supplement that explores this subject in greater depth.



Get creative to stay motivated

WHAT? After a festive season that's packed with enough calories to power Clacton for a fortnight, we all roll into the New Year bursting with motivation. Sadly, it's not long before heading outdoors becomes a chore. But it won't if you mix it up.

HOW? This means riding new routes and different types of races. Cue Fab: 'At the Vuelta in 2009, I won the prologue despite only having a 15-minute warm-up. That's when I knew I needed a new challenge.' Fab then transformed himself into a one-day specialist. So, consider cyclocross in the winter as well as midweek local time-trials during the spring and summer to boost fitness and technique for upcoming sportives.

Eat more healthily

WHAT? There's no point following a training plan or riding numerous times each week with the aim of shedding a few pounds if you fuel yourself on cigarettes and alcohol. Or, as Cancellara says, 'If you always eat white bread, you're not going anywhere. It's the same with high-sugar cereal.'

HOW? Instead, go for the healthier option, like quinoa or muesli that's packed with whole oats not processed versions.' Fabian also recommends heading to a good butchers rather than supermarkets. And as the World Health Organisation recently warned against processed meat, it's timely and sage advice. Obviously, good meat costs, but it's better to cut out one or two poor-quality meats each week and go for a cheaper, healthier option – jacket potato with tuna, for instance – than live on Spam.


Have a bike fitting

WHAT? 'In 2000, we had bike-fitting at the Mapei Centre when I was still racing for Mapei,' says Spartacus. 'To this day, I still undergo bike-fitting. It's important because, as you age, your body changes.'

HOW? Cancellara and co at Trek-Segafredo employ the services of London-based bike-fitters Cyclefit. The Covent Garden team offer a high-tech service that involves everything from side-on and face-on video analysis to saddle pressure mapping and bespoke insoles. Bike-fitting isn't the sole preserve of the elite. The cost of a good fitting can vary quite a bit, but begins from around £100-£150. This might sound a lot, but it's nothing compared to what some riders spend on wheels and can have a huge impact on your performance.

Become self-reliant

WHAT? 'I want to know how something works. I want to know how it's built, what materials are used, how to change wheels, tyres... It's good to be inquisitive,' so says forensic cyclist, Cancellara.

HOW? His inquisitorial manner not only stretches to his racing – he was involved in the original designs of Trek's popular Domane – but to all facets of his life, including haranguing his accountant. And you should be, too, when it comes to your pride and joy. Getting to know your local, respected bike-shop owner is a good start, but by learning how to do everything from mending a puncture to changing your cassette, you'll save money and boost your sense of pride. 

10 WAYS TO STOKE YOUR CYCLING POWER AND ENDURANCE

Strength training should be a part of every cyclist's routine. Here's why and how...

Getting fit on your bike isn't just about crunching winter miles. If you want to maximise the health benefits of your time in the saddle, you should try to integrate some power and endurance training and – from core exercises to weight training – this easy-to-follow 10-point action plan shows how simple that can be.

1 HIIT THE BIKE

High-intensity Interval Training (HIIT) or Tabata training is great for building strength and power. Dr Izumi Tabata, a Kyoto-based academic, conducted a study using an interval-based training programme to see if athletes would benefit from doing four minutes of exercise a day using a 20/10 session repeated eight times – 20/10 being 20 seconds of all-out exertion, followed by 10 seconds of rest. His test subjects improved their aerobic and anaerobic fitness levels by 28%. Use HIIT on your bike or turbo trainer and you'll be sprinting like Cav and climbing like Contador come the spring. It's also great for burning fat.



2 DO MORE FOR YOUR CORE

Core exercises are easy to do just about anywhere and you'll reap the benefits in the saddle. Your core is the main trunk of your body from the top of your knees to your shoulders. Greater strength throughout your entire core means great stability on the bike, and that means greater efficiency when pedalling. Greater strength in your upper core (everything above the waist to your neck) means reduced chances of back pain, which also translates as greater endurance. So do some crunches or try the trusty plank. Simply prop yourself up on your elbows and toes. Your elbows should be at 90°. Keeping your spine straight, tense your stomach muscles and clench your buttocks. Hold this position for as long as you can. Initially aim for a minute, then build up to two, and so on.



3 GET TOUGH ON BONE LOSS

Exercising in a seated position may be great for your joints, but it can wreak havoc with your bone density. A 2008 study for the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research found that bone density in male cyclists decreased significantly over the course of a year, with some showing signs of osteopenia – a precursor to osteoporosis. This was what forced Chris Boardman to retire at 32, so beware! How can you counter it? Simply boost your calcium intake – a vital ingredient for repairing bone tissue. Make sure you're getting plenty of dark green leafy veg in your diet, as well as (unsweetened) Greek yoghurt. Finally, add a vitamin D supplement to boost absorption.





Add weight training to your exercise routine – it'll help you maintain bone density

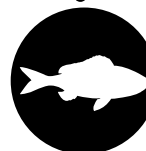
4 LIFT WEIGHTS

Adding a little weight training to your exercise routine, will also help bolster bone density. Purists will argue that weight lifting is bad for cyclists, because it creates bulky (heavy) muscle. There's also the argument that the bigger your muscles, the harder your heart has to work to feed them with oxygen – but there are two ways to work with weights, if you think about it. The first is to perform low repetitions with huge weights like a body builder. The other is to perform high repetitions using much lighter weights. Training this way will help supercharge your metabolism, strengthen your muscles, give your heart a great workout and – of course – help maintain bone density.



5 CHOMP PROTEIN

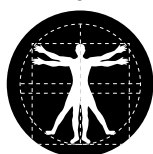
Protein intake is key as it helps to maintain muscle tissue and aid recovery. The day after a long ride you really feel it in your legs – that ache is actually your muscle tissue repairing itself. So it figures that by eating more protein – which will also help stave off muscle loss as you age – will help build your endurance. The best sources include whole eggs, wild salmon, cottage cheese, sardines, nuts and quinoa, as well as meats such as chicken and lean beef. Protein fills you up and provides you with essential amino acids, so make sure you consume it throughout the day – not just at dinner – for maximum benefits.



6

MIX IT UP, MAX IT OUT

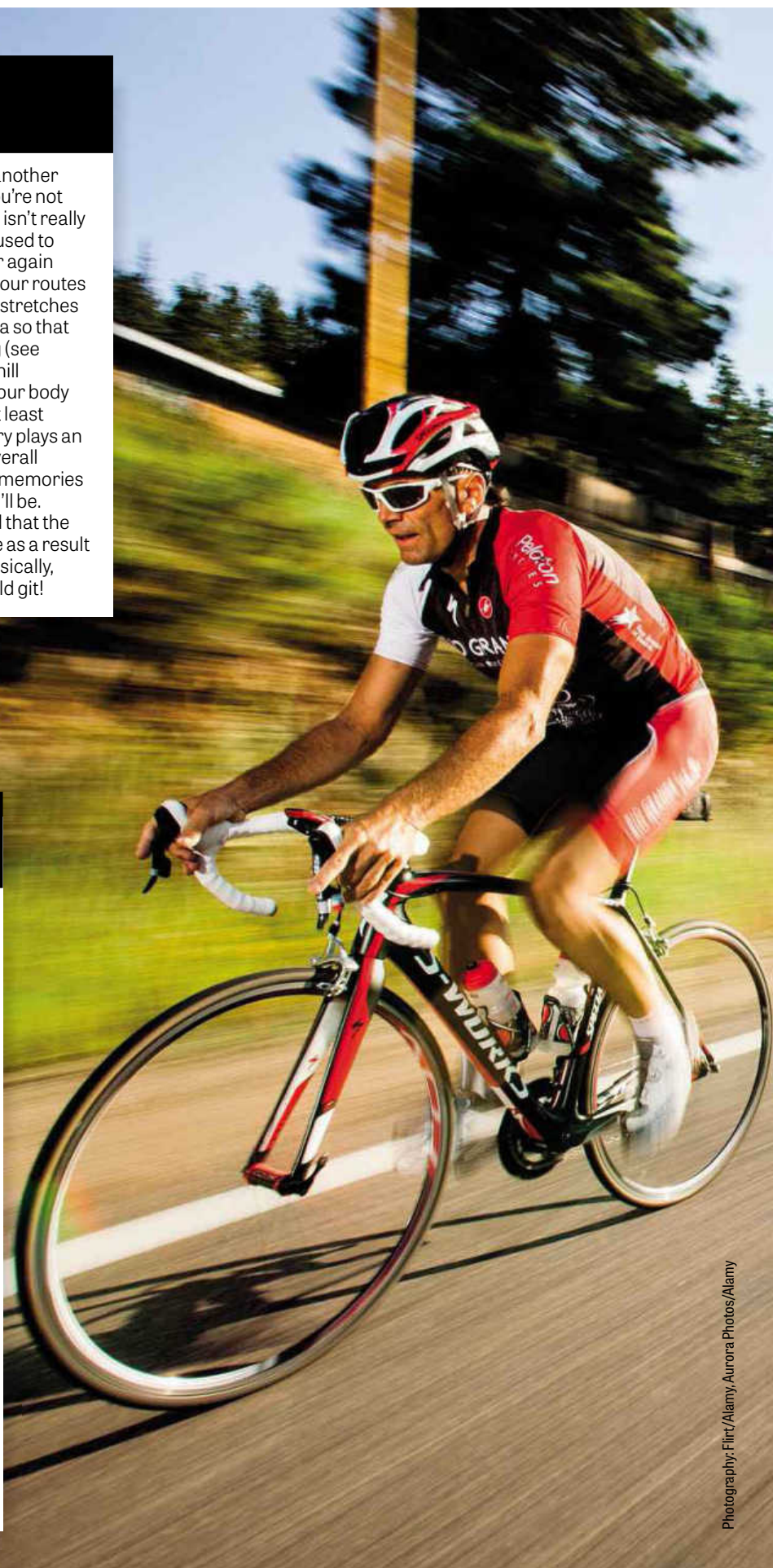
Remember that 'test' is another word for exercise, and if you're not stretching yourself, your body isn't really reaping the benefit. Your body gets used to doing the same things over and over again very quickly, so make sure you vary your routes and the efforts you put in on various stretches of them. Also mix up your cycling rota so that you're not always doing LSD training (see below) on a Sunday, for example, or hill climbing on a Tuesday. To exercise your body – to test it – you need to shock it, or at least surprise it. So-called muscle memory plays an important role in developing your overall strength, so it figures that the more memories your muscles have, the stronger you'll be. Various studies have also suggested that the additional strength muscles acquire as a result of training is very long-lasting. So basically, you'll look hot even when you're an old git!



7

WHY NOT TRY LSD?

No, thankfully not that mind-melting stuff so favoured by smiley ravers back in the day, but long, steady distance – or LSD – training. Cycling is an endurance sport, and riding long distances will push that endurance, but remember the 'S' in LSD stands for 'steady' not 'slow' – so don't hang around. If you have to stop to refuel, don't dally. Your mantra should be to keep moving. Once you've built up your base fitness after a couple of long rides, look to push yourself a little harder each time you attempt a longer challenge. Use a bike computer to record your average speeds, and each time you go out, push yourself to maintain an average speed that's slightly beyond what you've been riding at previously. Another tip is to use a heart-rate monitor to see how low you can keep your heart rate while you're doing it.



Photography: Flint/Alamy, Aurora Photos/Alamy

If you want killer legs like Olympic sprinter Robert Förstermann? Taking creatine would be an essential part of your journey to thigh-chaffing glory!

8 GUZZLE SUPPLEMENTS

The health and fitness market is overloaded with more strength-enhancing supplements than we could lift, but creatine is the best. This amazing amino acid, which can be taken either in powder form diluted in water or milk, or as a capsule, increases the body's ability to produce energy rapidly. And more energy means you can train harder and more frequently – which produces faster results. Research shows that creatine is most effective when used in conjunction with HIIT (see point 1). So how does it work? Simple, it pulls water into your muscle cells and its presence helps to increase protein synthesis. Is it safe? Undoubtedly, as it's one of the most-researched supplements in the world. So if you ever want to build legs like German Olympic sprinter Robert Förstermann, then taking creatine would be an essential part of your journey to thigh-chaffing glory!



9 TAKE THE LUNGE

Ah, the humble lunge. So beloved of shouty aerobic teachers, this is an ideal exercise for boosting your strength, because they work each of your legs individually, targeting your quadriceps, hips and hamstrings so that they get a proper workout. They're easy to perform too. Simply stand with both feet together and take a huge step forward so that your leading leg is at a 90° angle to the floor, and your trailing knee is hovering just above the floor. Hold for a second, then push yourself back up to the starting position. Repeat stepping forward with the other leg. Look to do between three to five sets of between 15 and 30 repetitions each. To avoid injury, ensure that the knee of your leading leg is always behind the toes or the corresponding foot. The lunge is a great exercise that can be done anywhere, but perhaps swerve doing them at work, eh? At best, you'll end up looking like David Brent, at worst you could get a call from HR!



10 REMEMBER TO REST

Your body isn't a machine. If you follow an intense fitness routine, particularly one that's geared to boosting strength and endurance, you're putting your joints, bones and muscles under a lot of pressure. Listen to your body. Take notice of aches and pains – don't use them as excuses for not exercising – but be wary of overdoing it and make sure you build in at least one rest day a week. It's essential your body has time to recover – and recovery days will also help you refocus on your goals. Exercising every day can get tedious, and having a well-earned day off when you just go for a stroll or take the dog for a walk to get some air in your lungs is the perfect way to make sure that you retain that all-important balance which is vital for a happy, healthy life. 🚴





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HOW TO...

Replace disc brake pads

Follow these simple steps to sort yours out in no time at all

Although disc brakes have been around on MTBs for years, many road riders are only just getting to grips with them – but there's nothing to be afraid of. As with any new tech, there's a little bit of know-how to get your head around if you want to take on the job of servicing them yourself.

Luckily, swapping disc-brake pads is simplicity itself, whether you're using a mechanical or hydraulic system. All you need is a new set of pads and a few tools – including a pair of needle-nose pliers. Follow our six-step guide and get stuck in.

TIP: Bed in new pads by sprinting then grabbing the brakes as hard as possible without locking the wheels. This will build up heat. Repeat 10 times. You're done!



1 WHEELS COME OFF

Drop out your wheels. Check the pads – you should have at least 1.5mm of material left on them. Don't be tempted to wear them all the way to the backing plate as this can damage the rotor (which will be a far costlier repair).



2 PADS POP OUT

The pads are usually secured by a pin, often with a snap clip on the end. Remove the clip and unscrew the pin. Pull the pads and spring out the top of the calliper. They should come easily, but use a pair of needle-nose pliers if necessary.



3 PISTONS RETRACT

If you're working on a hydraulic system, you'll need to reset the pistons. Use a piston press or improvise with a blunt implement like a plastic tyre lever. Gently waggle it about between the pistons to push them flush with the calliper.



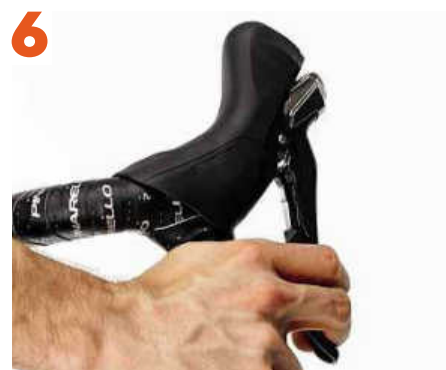
4 NEW PADS GO IN

Take your new pads and sandwich the spring between them. The thin arms should sit either side of the pad material. Drop the pads into the calliper. Make sure everything is sitting comfortably before you proceed to the next stage.



5 SECURE WITH A PIN

Pop the pin back into the calliper and through the pads and spring. Tighten this up and refit the retaining clip on the end. You can now refit the wheels. Give the rotors a quick wipe with some isopropyl alcohol first to clean them of gunk.



6 CHECK FUNCTION

On a hydraulic system, you'll need to pump the levers 5-10 times. This should readjust the whole system. Spin the wheels to check the pads aren't rubbing. If they are, you may need to reposition the calliper before trying again. 🚲



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PHOTO CREDIT: JUAN TRUJILLO ANDRADES

OUT THERE

INSPIRATIONAL ROUTES AND
MUST-DO CHALLENGES



TEST RIDE

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WHO'S RIDING...



MATTHEW PAGE
BIKESETC



HUW THOMAS
MTB RACER



RICHARD MANNING
MTB RACER





BRECON BEACONS

Through the old industrial heart of the South Wales

WHERE: **BRECON BEACONS**

TOTAL DISTANCE: **84KM**

TOTAL ELEVATION: **1,490M**

Comprising four ranges of mountains in southern Wales, the Brecon Beacons national park offers so many great opportunities for cyclists that it's hard to know exactly where to start when planning a route. We wanted to give our endurance bikes a real workout, so we jumped straight into the central area, but looked for lesser known routes, away from the traffic.

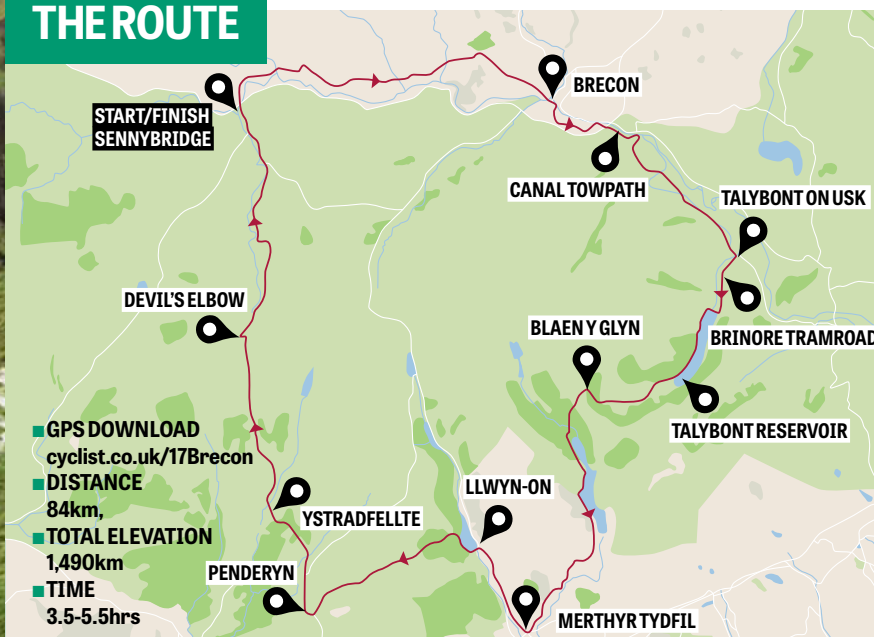
Even by Welsh standards, it's been a wet winter so far, with not a single dry day measured in December and January didn't start off well either. As we make our way to the start, the heavens are open, but the forecast is for clearing skies and our fingers are crossed.

Along for the ride are locals Richard Manning and Huw Thomas, both well used to wet-weather riding, living in one of the soggiest areas of Wales – which is just as well today. Our start point is Sennybridge, known for its MOD camp, and the town thrives off the soldiers based there. Before setting off, we huddle in a café, surrounded by soldiers, hoping at least for a dry start to the ride as the temperature outside hovers around 1 degree. As we eventually begin our ride, the back roads heading out of the village are more like rivers, with a bed of stones and gravel washed right across, making progress challenging.

As we push on, through the small villages that lie along the quiet road that runs parallel to the busy A40, the rain eases and the roads improve. The first major town we pass through is Brecon, a historic market town that today draws tourists keen to walk, run or ride around the surrounding mountains. We pass through the centre, but soon after, dive off onto the partially off-road Taff Trail, a



THE ROUTE



1 We started in Sennybridge, but starting further along the route in Brecon or Merthyr would work just as well. Take the minor road adjacent to the A40 east through Aberbran and Cradoc to Brecon.

2 From Brecon, the Taff Trail along the canal is a nice

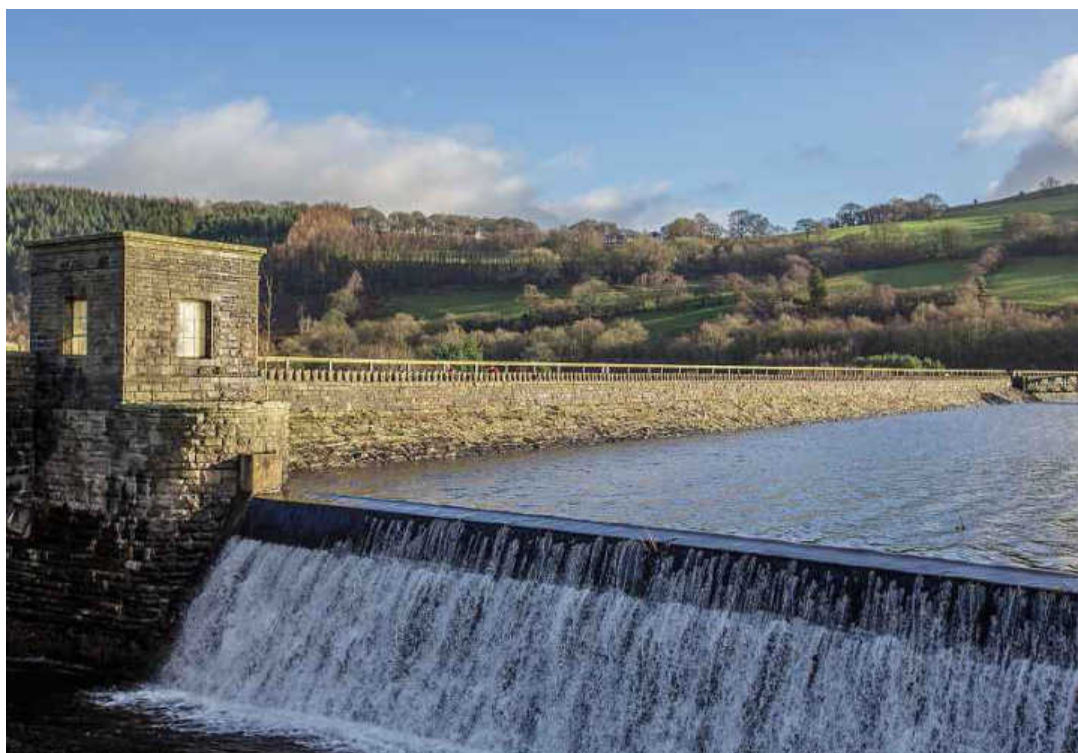
alternative to the busy roads. Join the B558 and follow to the village of Talybont on Usk.

3 Rejoin the Taff Trail, on to the Brinore Tramroad then drop back to Talybont Reservoir.

4 Soon after you'll tackle Blaen Y Glyn and then a rolling

road past Pontsticill to the edge of Merthyr Tydfil.

5 After 3km on the A470 you reach Llwyn-On. The climb over Cwm Cadlan is stunning. Savour the final section via Ystradfellte and along Sarn Helen to Devil's Elbow, then down and back to Sennybridge.



When the weather turned to sunshine the sky and lush scenery came alive

HIGHLIGHTS

Singling out a few highlights was almost as hard as the climbs, but here are a few key moments to savour

BRINORE TRAMROAD

While anyone not wishing to go off-road can divert around easily, we were amazed at how capable standard road bikes coped off-road. A short section of old railway line that climbs very gradually on a bumpy, rocky bridleway.

BLAEN Y GLYN

The toughest climb on the route. A 3.1km climb in total with over 1km of steep roads up to 20%. Starting gradually, it crosses a river and kicks up to 20% and averages 11% to the summit.

DEVIL'S ELBOW

More famous as a climb, our route takes on the mighty Devil's Elbow as a descent. The valley leading from Ystradfellte climbing gradually to the top is stunning, as is the view from the top, looking down the steep-sided slope of the Elbow. Hold on tight as the road switchbacks steeply away beneath you.

waymarked Sustrans route that covers the 60 miles from Brecon to Cardiff. Riding by the canal as we swing under the low bridges along the way makes for a nice diversion off the busier roads through the town.

Back onto the black stuff, we head towards Talybont on Usk, a famous starting point for many a journey within the mountains and home to several very good pubs. Both Huw and Richard ride mountain bikes and they lead the way up behind the Star Inn onto the Brinore Tramroad. This was an early 19th century horse-drawn railroad that was used for bringing materials from the Welsh valleys to the canal and offers us a different kind of challenge – one that we wouldn't normally try on pure road bikes. The bridleway that exists now is rocky, muddy and bumpy, but all of our

skinny-tyred bikes make it through without a hitch. The full tramroad continues for over 13km, but today we're only sampling a 2km stretch before heading down a fire road and rejoining a road across the top of Talybont Reservoir that's in violent full flow.

As we follow the road around the perimeter of the reservoir, the valley closes in at the top with no easy way out. Blaen y Glyn lies ahead of us – one of the hardest climbs not just in Brecon, but the whole of South Wales. Its long, unrelenting gradient is a challenge and one to be relished. As we crest the top, the skies open up with the sun starting to make a brief appearance. It gives a good opportunity to stop and grab a bite to eat and savour the views with the sunlight dances around us.

The top of the hill is also the highest point

of the ride, with the road ahead undulating downwards for the next 10km, passing Pontsticill Reservoir and through Taf Fechan forest towards the outskirts of Merthyr Tydfil. Famed for turning out a slew of great boxers, the countryside surrounding it is knockout beautiful, some of the best in Wales in fact. A mix of new and old, with remnants of the industrial age visible all around.

Soon after, we're forced onto the A470 – a busy single-carriageway road that really has no alternative should you wish to head north up the Taff valley. Thankfully, the 3km section that we use is wide and straight, and traffic isn't as bad as it could be as we tuck into a line and go into team time-trial mode to get it over as quickly as possible. Our turn-off point is another reservoir; Llwyn On is full to the brim



Sharp bends on super-steep descents test our bike-handling skills



SARN HELEN'S ANCIENT ROMAN ROAD USED TO RUN THE LENGTH OF WALES


and overflowing spectacularly. Anyone in need of sustenance can detour here towards the Garwnant visitor centre for a quick bite.

Keen to push on we head up the next climb of Cwm Cadlan. While it is nowhere near as steep as Blaen y Glyn, it has a real charm to it. Meandering a little at the bottom through a pine forest then opening out to moorland on top with the road width barely big enough for one car. Traffic has on the whole been quiet the whole day, but this road in particular is almost deserted. Dropping down the other side to the village of Penderyn, which is home to Wales's only whisky and gin distillery. Sadly we don't have time to visit today.

We briefly ride on the A4059, one of the finest driving roads in the whole of the UK, then peel off onto quieter roads once

again. We pass through the small village of Ystradfellte which has a fantastic pub and a post office. For anyone floundering at this point, it's the final chance to refuel.

The roads leaving the village onwards are absolutely stunning, climbing steadily then joining the ancient Roman road of Sarn Helen. Built in the 4th Century, it once ran the length of Wales, but today only sections of it are still present and most of this exists off-road. We ride a short section before reaching the top of Devil's Elbow as the famous road zigzags up the extremely steep hillside on the other side.

As a descent, it needs to be taken carefully, but after the first few hairpins the sight lines improve and so does the speed. We make it back to Sennybridge, all with feet like blocks of ice, but delighted to have dodged the rain. 



LAGOS DE COVADONGA

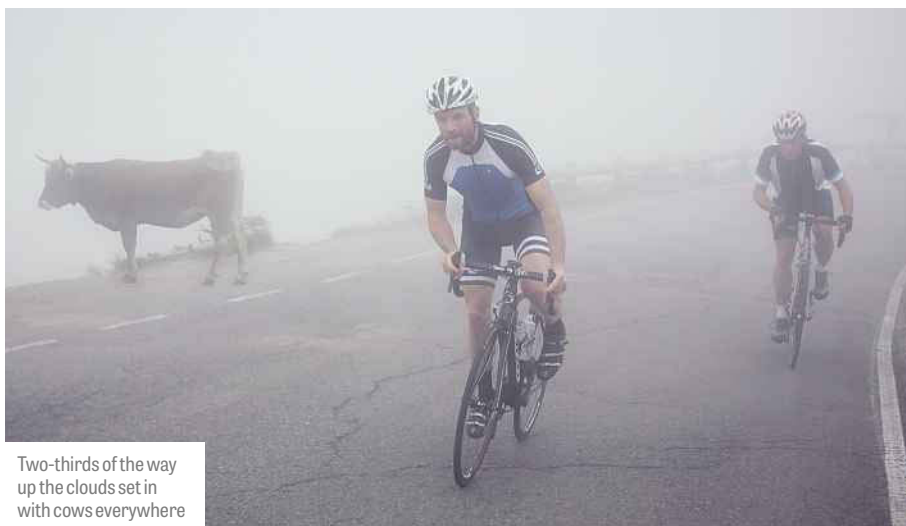
Have you got what it takes to tame this mighty Spanish monster? We gave it a go!

When a climb has featured 19 times in the Vuelta a España, you know that it's something special. The Lagos de Covadonga is where cycling legends such as Robert Millar, Laurent Jalabert and Luis Herrera have stormed to victory and where others, like five-times Tour de France winner Miguel Indurain, have been crushed, humiliated and defeated.

There's only one route up to the Lagos (lakes) and it's on a long, winding road, with an average gradient of 7.3%. The 12.6km section from Covadonga to the summit may not be as lengthy as some of the Alpine greats, but with sections where the incline hits 15%, riding this climb is a true test of any cyclist's mettle – and of his lungs for that matter.

The road starts to go up from the village of Cangas de Onís, but these lower slopes are merely a warm up. Winding through pine, beech and Pyrenean oak woodland, the landscape is typical of the lush, green Asturias region of northwest Spain. The first five kilometres are nothing to trouble the legs, but don't let the gentle 2% incline fool you because from kilometre five, things start to wind up.

The climb proper starts in the village of Covadonga, famous for its elaborate basilica with a statue of the Virgin Mary that allegedly



Two-thirds of the way up the clouds set in with cows everywhere

inspired Pelagius, King of Asturias, to repossess this region from the Moors.

A kilometre past the basilica is where the incline tips into double figures for the first time. From the forest, the landscape opens up, exposing the peaks of the Picos de Europa, the mountain range that runs east to west, 20km inland from the north Spanish coast.

THE COVADONGA IS WHERE TOUR DE FRANCE LEGEND MIGUEL INDURAIN WAS CRUSHED AND HUMILIATED

Lagos de Covadonga has a reputation for its cruel ramps and its most demanding section *La Huesera* comes 7km from the top of the climb. With an average gradient of 15% for 800m, this is the point where on-form pros will unleash from the bunch – it's where Kelme rider Fernando Escartin launched an attack in the 1997 Vuelta (stage 15), only to be overtaken in the last 2km by the Russian Pavel Tonkov.

Tonkov still holds the record for the fastest ascent with an almost superhuman 33.47 minutes at an average speed of 22.73km/h. To give you some idea just how fast that is, to those outside of the pro peloton, anything under an hour is regarded as respectable.

Words: Susannah Osborne



The basilica (below) features a statue of the Virgin Mary



Near the summit the road flattens out and, as if by magic, starts to mercifully descend. This 500m section is a blessed relief, but it's over in no time at all and the last kick takes a nasty turn for the unwary (or worse, unprepared) with final sections regularly topping out at a thigh-mangling 20%.

If riders don't have anything left in their legs for this final punishing *dénouement* they'll be in all kinds of trouble.

The Lagos de Covadonga is a tough, yet treasured climb. To experience what forced Indurain to climb off his bike and quit, simply head for Cangas de Onís, take a deep breath and cycle up. You'll soon find out. 🚴



There's a lovely wiggly bit past the two lakes right at the summit



RACE NUMBERS

1

Number of statues of the Virgin Mary on the route

1985

The year of the climb's first inclusion in the Vuelta (it since made 19 appearances)

2

Lakes at the summit – Lagos Enol and Lagos Ercina

4.3 KM/H

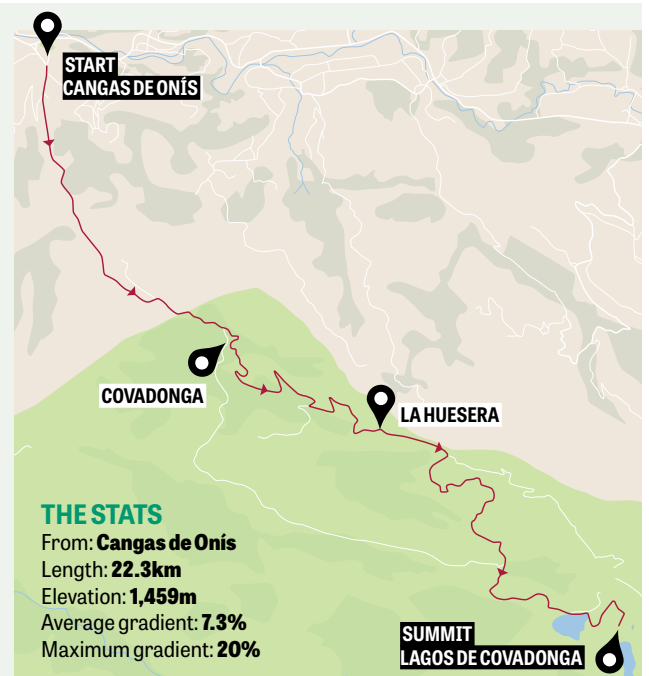
The slowest average speed of the 2,020 logged Strava attempts. Robert Gesink of LottoNL-Jumbo currently holds the KOM record.

DO IT YOURSELF

The route to the summit starts in Cangas de Onís, a village in the Asturias region of Spain. The nearest airport is Asturias, which is a 90-minute drive away. To find the climb, ride south along the AS-262 from Cangas, which runs along the Rio Reinazo river. Next, take the second exit at the roundabout onto the CO-4, which is the Lagos climb.



SPAIN





THE ISLE OF MULL SPORTIVE

We head into the Scottish wilds for this stunning coastline sportive



WHEN: SUNDAY 5 JUNE, 2016 **WHERE:** TOBERMORY, ISLE OF MULL, SCOTLAND **DISTANCE:** 87 MILES/140KM (STARTS 8AM), 44 MILES/75KM (STARTS 9.30AM) **COST:** £25 **SIGN UP:** MULLCYCLOSPORTIVE.CO.UK

What is it?

A one-day sportive taking you on a tour of the stunning coastline and undulating hinterland of the Island of Mull, in the Inner Hebrides. Mull, just off the west coast of Scotland, is home to 2,800 people.

Tell me more about the route...

Both routes explore the northwestern part of the island. You'll start in the colourful town of Tobermory where the sight of brightly painted houses should awaken your senses ahead of the ride. It's a tough 6km drag out of town, but the reward is a spin along the coast road through Salen to Craignure. Skirting the Sound of Mull, expect to see seals basking on rocks and buzzards overhead.

So it's all flat?

No, not at all! Both routes are gently undulating with a few killer climbs thrown in. The 75km short route has around 640 metres of climbing, while the 140km route has 1,500m. For those doing the long route, the main climbing begins with an ascent to Glen More and then towards (but thankfully not over) Ben More – the only island Munro (peak above 3,000m altitude) outside Skye. A timely descent west to Pennyghael gives the chance to take in views of the 480km-long coastline. Next stop is Gribun Cliffs, a beautiful stretch of road with sheer cliffs on one side and the sea on the other. Then it's Calgary Bay – think of a Bounty advert set in Scotland, with turquoise water and white sand, but

The Isle of Mull Cycle Club set the leisurely, inclusive pace



brass-monkey cold. Tostray Hill is a 25% killer, but by then you're nearly home. Just grin and bear the ordeal, it'll be over soon enough!

Sounds exotic, but how do I get there?

It's all part of the adventure. Mull is 500 miles by car from London, and 340 miles from Manchester. Your best bet is to take a train or fly to Glasgow and then take the direct train from Glasgow to Oban. From there it's a 45-minute ferry ride to Craignure on Mull. Once you're on the island, Tobermory is another 40-minute car ride away. Mull Car Hire (mullcarhire.co.uk) has an office at the port. Ferry crossings can be booked at calmac.co.uk.

And where do I stay?

The colourful harbour town of Tobermory (setting for the CBeebies programme *Balamory*) has many lovely B&Bs. Isle of Mull Cottages (isleofmullcottages.com) can also organise self-catering accommodation for cyclists taking part in the event. Visit tobermory.co.uk for details.

What are the conditions like?

Well, brace yourself because it'll almost certainly be windy, so you'll just have to suck it up. Oh, and

remember, you're starting at sea level – so heading upwards is par for the course.

Is this a competitive sportive?

Well they say: 'The Mull Cycle Club invites cyclists old, young, speedy or not so speedy'. This sportive has an unusual and spectacular location – so why not take it easy and savour the awesome views?

What's the set-up – is it on closed roads?

The event does take place on open roads, but it's well signposted. There's a drink stop at the top of Glen More and a much-needed cake stop just over half way at Ulva school. You'll want to stop there.

Where does the entry fee go?

The £25 entry fee goes towards the food and drink stops, the broom wagon and the hearty meal that greets you at the finish. Any leftover funds go to local charities and volunteer organisations.

What do I get at the end?

If you're lucky, some whisky from the Tobermory Distillery. Established in 1798, it's one of the oldest in Scotland and produces two fine single malts. Best to refuel before guzzling your first dram, though!



Words: Susannah Osborne Photos: isleofmullcottages.com



The views on Mull make this sportive one of the UK's most special



CLUB RUN

We head into Surrey on a ride with SWRC

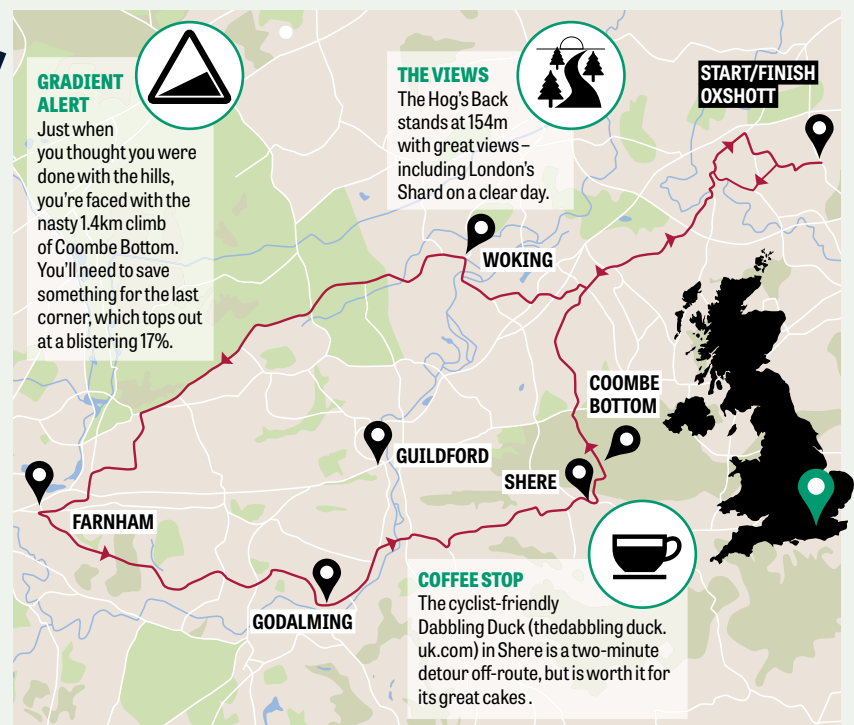


THE CLUB The bright red and blue jerseys of SWRC (South Western Road Club) are a common and friendly sight on the highways and byways of Surrey. It was formed in 1930 as a road-racing club, but today takes a more genteel approach to riding, with the majority of members preferring sportives, audaxes or to simply rock up for the Saturday club run.

The 200-strong club is known throughout the southeast for its hugely successful May Flyer sportive, which offers fully marked 143km and 86km routes. The 2015 edition raised well over £5,000 for local charities, and the 18th edition takes place on Sunday 8 May 2016 – visit swrc.org.uk/mayflyer-sportive.

With five groups setting out every Saturday from Cobham or Betchworth (9.30am), the club has something for every kind of cyclist – there really is no barrier to age or experience. An induction ride for real beginners rolls out at 12mph, while the A Group runs along at a tidy 20mph for up to 100 miles at a time. For those looking to clock up the miles mid-week there are mixed-ability group rides on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, too. Live locally? You should get involved!

FOR MORE DETAILS SEE
swrc.org.uk



South Western Road Club's Club Run

DISTANCE: **87KM** TOTAL ELEVATION: **836M**
DOWNLOAD THE ROUTE: CYCLIST.CO.UK/17SWRC

Want to see your club run in *BikesEtc*? Email us at bikesetc@dennis.co.uk



Strain showing on Honister Pass (left); skirting around Thirlmere lake (above)

LAKE DISTRICT

Take on some of Britain's toughest, most notorious climbs

TOTAL DISTANCE: **140KM** TOTAL ELEVATION: **2,875M** TIME: **5-7HRS**

Where does the route start?

The ancient market town of Cockermouth on the northwestern edge of the Lake District.

How do I get there?

By car, leave the M6 at junction 40 (Penrith) and follow the A66 through Keswick. There's no easy route to Cockermouth by public transport, but you can take a train to Carlisle, then another train to Workington, which is about eight miles away from Cockermouth.

What's the route like?

Challenging or, if you're not on form, a total nightmare. The route comprises two loops via Keswick covering a total of 140km, which is already a significant distance, but on top of that, there's almost 3,000 metres of ascent. There are a few flattish sections but not many. Make sure you bring your climbing legs.

What's the most scenic bit?

The views are uniformly spectacular in this part of Britain, but you'll be clinging on to your bars with your head down so much, you might miss not get the chance to enjoy them. Best stop for a bit at the summits to wipe the sweat out of your eyes, get your heart rate back to normal and soak up the vistas.

And the gradients?

Hair-raising, mate! The Lake District is best known among cyclists for the notorious Fred Whitton Challenge, one of the hardest sportives on British soil. Rather than creating roads that snake gently up hillsides through

a series of hairpins, as any self-respecting French or Italian road builder would do, roads in the Lakes are built directly up the steepest parts of hills, creating gradients that are impassable for many vehicles. Perhaps they wanted to preserve as much of the natural countryside as possible by limiting the tarmac footprint? Whatever the reason, they're tough.

Which is the toughest climb?

There are plenty to choose from – 20% inclines pop up early on and keep coming. The Honister Pass unveils its true colours after a bridge about 1km from the summit. From there, it's five minutes of flat-out effort to drag yourself to the top. You'd be excused for taking 10 minutes to wrestle with its 25% sting finish. Then there's the aptly named 'The Struggle' – the climb over Kirkstone Pass starts as soon as you turn off the road out of Ambleside. It may not have the steepest gradients, but rising from 18m to its 460m summit, you'll experience 5km of climbing at close to a 10% average gradient.

Where are the café stops?

There are plenty of pubs and cafés along the route. We stopped for lunch at a small, scenic



pub beside Grasmere and ordered half a dozen jacket potatoes with every topping – causing a mild stir among the locals with our Lycra-clad intrusion. The food at the Lazy Fish in Cockermouth is also pretty good.

What are the road surfaces like?

Mostly tarmac with some quasi-cobbled sections thrown in for good measure.

Is there anywhere to stay?

We stayed at the Lazy Fish, a converted barn in Embleton, just outside Cockermouth (and on the route), which offers self-catering accommodation for up to six adults. It has a giant woodburner in an expansive living room, a spacious kitchen and a jet-powered hot tub (just what you need after a day's ride). Prices start from £496 for a three-night stay. Visit lazyfish.co.uk for more details. 🚲

RATHER THAN SNAKE GENTLY UP HILLSIDES, HERE ROADS ARE BUILT DIRECTLY UP THE STEEPEST PARTS



This descent after 'The Struggle' is a chance to get your breath back

HIGH AND MIGHTY Try this challenging loop for yourself

GPS DOWNLOAD cyclist.co.uk/17Lakes

- 1 From Cockermouth, take B2592 southeast over Whinlatter Pass to Braithwaite.
- 2 In Braithwaite, turn right and continue over Newlands Pass to Buttermere. Turn left onto B5289 and over Honister Pass.
- 3 Continue past Derwentwater to Keswick. Follow signs to take A591 towards Windermere. Turn off A591 at Legburthwaite to take minor road around Thirlmere. Rejoin A591 to Ambleside.
- 4 Turn left signposted Kirkstone – and climb! After 'The Struggle', continue for 20km, turn left onto A5091 to Troutbeck. Turn left just before Troutbeck onto minor roads.
- 5 You will have to ride a short stretch on the A66, but turn off at Threlkeld to take minor roads to Keswick.
- 6 Take A591 north to Bassenthwaite. Turn left onto B5291. Turn left then right across A66, then right by Pheasant Inn and continue on minor roads to Cockermouth.



Stuff we like

The *BikesEtc* team picks out its favourite items featured in this month's issue...



Nick Soldinger
Editor
POC AVIP Softshell Jacket, p70

It's nice not to die, but looking cool is definitely more important. POC's latest hi-viz collection means you can stay safe without looking like a 90s rave casualty.



Joseph Delves
Staff writer
Specialized Allez Sprint, p14

Being a unique snowflake, I need a bike that reflects this when I go crit racing. Thankfully, Specialized announced that its originally American-only Allez Sprint can now be bought in the UK on special order. Sorted!



Andrew Sumner
Art director
Vélochef, p62

After a winter of sofa-surfing and biscuit-bothering, my trousers are getting a tad tight around the waist. *Vélochef* looks full of tasty recipes that will get me looking (and hopefully riding) like Chris Froome in no time.



Craig Cunningham
Editorial assistant
Endura FS260 Pro Slick Overshoes, p80

These Endura overshoes not only look good, but also work a lot better than the plastic bags that I've been wrapping around my feet.



David Kenning
Deputy editor
J.Laverack J.ACK1, p100

J.Laverack has made a titanium bike that's qualified for anything the weather throws at it. I reckon it would be ideal for my commute, where I often seem to ride through all four seasons in one day.



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FLAT CORNERING: 10/10 | CORNERING ON DESCENTS: 10/10 | CLIMBING: 10/10 | DRIVETRAIN FOR PERFORMANCE: 10/10 | OVERALL FOR PERFORMANCE: 10/10



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